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ABSTRACT

Media literacy is the topic of this second white paper presented by Cable in the Classroom. Six different contributions were invited which give a variety of perspectives and recommendations to consider. A dialogue around the topic, and the paper itself, were also created; 29 educators (list of participants provided at the end of the document) were invited to read the paper, and to join the discussion on October 15, 2002 in Washington, DC. What ensued was the conversation, a transcript of which is presented at the end of this document. Contributions include: "Think, Interpret, Create" (Robert Kubey); "Empowered Parents: Role Models for Taking Charge of TV Viewing" (Folami Prescott-Adams); "Media Literacy and Prevention: Going Beyond 'Just Say No'" (Lynda Bergsma); "Parents and Teachers: Team Teaching Media Literacy" (Milton Chen, Sarah Armstrong, and Roberta Furger); "Media Literacy Across the Curriculum" (David M. Considine); and "New Media and New Media Literacy" (Neil Anderson). Want to Learn More About Media Literacy?; October 15, 2002 Conversation Participants; and October 15, 2002 Conversation Transcript are appended. (AEF)

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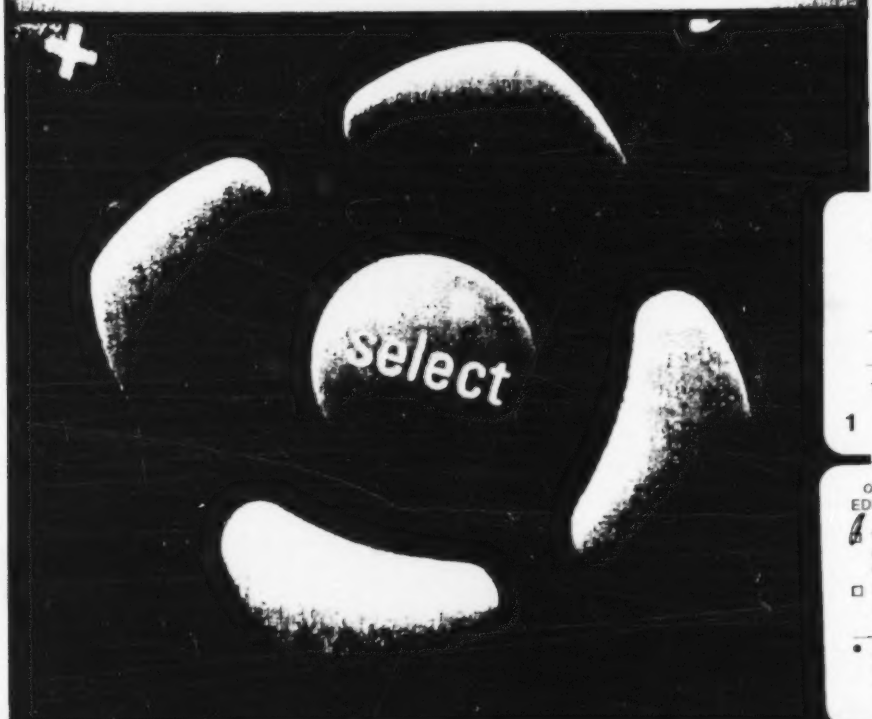
CABLE in the CLASSROOM

ED 474 408

THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT MEDIA: SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES IN PARTNERSHIP



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Six Perspectives and a Conversation

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CIC represents the cable telecommunications industry's commitment to education – to improve teaching and learning for children in schools, at home, and in their communities. This is the only industry-wide philanthropic initiative of its kind; since 1989, 8,500 cable companies and 39 cable networks have provided free access to commercial-free, educational cable content and new technologies to 81,000 public and private schools, reaching 78 percent of K-12 students. CIC focuses on five essential elements to ensure quality education in the 21st century: visionary and sensible use of technologies, engagement with rich content, community with other learners, excellent teaching, and the support of parents and other adults.

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A Three-Dimensional Conversation about Media Literacy

Cable in the Classroom is an education foundation rooted in a set of deeply held beliefs about the supreme importance of good teaching and learning for all, and the positive role that media and technology can have in that teaching and learning – whether it is at school, at home, at the Boys and Girls Club, or at Grandma's.

Our educational philosophy identifies the key elements to which every student and teacher is entitled:

- Visionary and sensible use of media and technology
- Engagement with rich content
- Membership in a meaningful community of learners
- Excellent teaching
- Support of parents and other adults

Media literacy has long been a part of our work – and is the cornerstone of our *Taking Charge of Your TV* partnership with the National PTA and the National Cable and Telecommunications Association. This is not because, to paraphrase contributing author Neil Andersen, television is an interesting appliance, but because it – along with its edgy younger sibling, the Internet – is being devoured by children outside of formal learning environments: at home, at the Boys and Girls Club, and at Grandmas' houses across the country.

As parents and teachers working with children, what should we know? What should we do? Anyone who is even vaguely acquainted with the field of media literacy knows that it is chock full of strong and divergent opinions that would yield many different answers to these questions. This is why, when we decided on media literacy as the topic of our second white paper, we knew that it was essential to invite a number of voices to the table.

We have done this in a couple of powerful ways. First, we invited six different and splendid voices to contribute pieces for the white paper. They alone present a rich variety of perspectives and recommendations to consider.

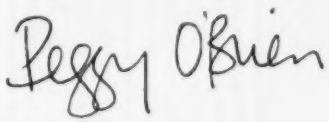
Next, we created a dialogue around the topic, and the paper itself. We invited a couple of dozen smart educators to read the paper, and to join us at a table in Washington, DC, to start talking and listening. What ensued was the lively and compelling conversation that you can read at the end of this volume (including a list of the participants).

This exchange proved valuable because it included a number of voices fresh to the topic, belonging to folks for whom media literacy is important but who do not work these fields on a daily basis. Several key concerns and questions surfaced:

- The often artificial distinction between media and technology
- The need for an adequate and consistent definition of media literacy
- The importance of parents as teachers
- The need for practical, meaningful teacher professional development

This conversation, of course, is no end in and of itself, but a checkpoint in the ongoing national dialogue on media literacy here at Cable in the Classroom.

Sincerely,



Peggy O'Brien, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Cable in the Classroom

National PTA®

*every*child.*one*voice.

October 2002

Dear Colleague:

Media literacy has been a key issue for National PTA since its founding in 1897. The organization, originally named The National Congress of Mothers, addressed the issue at its annual convention in 1910 by recommending the supervision of moving pictures and vaudeville performances by local mothers clubs because of the influence these entertainment forms could have on children and youth. The association continued to be at the forefront of media issues by supporting the Federal Communications Act of 1933, the Children's Television Act of 1990, and the V-Chip provisions in the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

Here we are in a new century, nearly 100 years later, in partnership with Cable in the Classroom and the National Cable & Telecommunications Association, addressing media literacy in its old as well as newest forms. Since 1994, our nationwide collaborative project, *Taking Charge of Your TV*, has reached tens of thousands of teachers, parents, and other caregivers. This critical viewing project helps parents and families make informed choices about the TV programs they watch and how to improve the way they watch these programs. And the strategies provided are applicable to any and all forms of entertainment and media.

National PTA recognizes the importance of media literacy as an essential life skill in the 21st century, and we know parent involvement is key to its success, not only at home, but in schools as well. Not only can we accentuate the positive effects of media, but critical viewing skills can also mitigate the negative impact of media on children and youth.

National PTA is pleased to take part in the launch of this timely and valuable report during Take Charge of Your TV Week. The publication confirms our belief in the importance of media literacy education at home and in the schools. Parents, teachers, and caregivers have a vital role in helping children use and view media content responsibly and knowledgeably.

Sincerely,

Shirley Igo

Shirley Igo, President
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Think. Interpret. Create.

How Media Education Promotes Critical Thinking, Democracy, Health, and Aesthetic Appreciation

Robert Kubey is director of the Center for Media Studies and associate professor of journalism and media studies at Rutgers University, New Brunswick. Trained as a developmental psychologist at the University of Chicago, Professor Kubey has been an Annenberg Scholar in Media Literacy at the University of Pennsylvania, a National Institute of Mental Health research fellow in the Program in Social Ecology at the University of California at Irvine, a research fellow of the Gerontological Society of America, a fellow of Rutgers' Center for the Critical Analysis of Contemporary Culture, and research director of the Media Education Laboratory at Rutgers, Newark. He has also been a visiting professor at Stanford University, and served on the faculty of the Institute on Media Education at Harvard University. He edited *Media Literacy in the Information Age: Current Perspectives* and co-edited a series of research volumes on media education. He co-authored *Television and the Quality of Life: How Viewing Shapes Everyday Experience*. His *Creating Television: The First 50 Years*, a book about the creative decision-making process in the American television industry, is due out in 2003.

by Robert Kubey, Ph.D.

Media literacy education is at a watershed moment around the world. We are making the inevitable and gradual turn to changing what we do in classrooms and at home to make education more student-centered and responsive to children's and society's real-world needs.

Media Education Around the World

A growing number of countries are developing media education programs in their schools. Canada now requires media education nationwide, and Australia requires it in all grades, K–12. Media education is also on the rise in Russia, China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, through nearly all of western Europe, and in an increasing number of countries in South America and Africa.

Media educators from around the world are meeting more often to share curricula, research, and strategies. The most recent conference, Summit 2000, "Children, Youth and the Media: Beyond the Millennium," was held in Toronto, Canada in May 2000. Representatives from nearly 60 countries attended, making this the largest gathering of media educators in history. In 1998, media educators congregated in Sao Paulo, Brazil for I Congresso Internacional sobre "Communicacao e Educacao: Multimidia e Educacao em um Mundo Globalizado."

In 1998–99, the 29th General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) approved support for media education following up on UNESCO's first call for media education in Paris in November 1989. In April 1999, 41 invited representatives from 33 countries met in Vienna and made the following statement and recommendations:

> Media education is the entitlement of every citizen, in every country in the world, to freedom of expression and the right to information and is instrumental in building and sustaining democracy. . . . Media education should be introduced wherever possible within national curricula as well as in tertiary, non-formal and lifelong education.

The Vienna Conference went on to state that media education:

- enables people to gain an understanding of the communication media used in their society and the way they operate and to acquire skills in using these media to communicate with others;

- ensures that people learn how to:
  - analyze, critically reflect upon, and create media texts;
  - identify the sources of media texts, their political, social, commercial and/or cultural interests, and their contexts;
  - interpret the messages and values offered by media;
  - select appropriate media for communicating their own messages or stories and for reaching their intended audience.

> We are making the inevitable and gradual turn to changing what we do in the classroom and at home to make education more student-centered and responsive to children's and society's real-world needs.

Media Education in the United States

Formal media education in the United States still lags behind every other major English-speaking country in the world. There are many reasons for this,[1] but one of the most interesting involves the enormous influx of U.S. media production into other countries. Australians, Scots, or Canadians often lament that what they perceive to be "American" values are permeating *their* media systems. They hope that media literacy will make their young citizens more critical and also more appreciative of indigenous programs. Such concerns, which provide a driving force for media education, are absent in the United States.

Still, many positive media literacy developments in the United States are worth noting. In addition to new national organizations promoting media literacy, a growing number of states have added media literacy goals to their education standards. In a 1999 study with Frank Baker, then president of the Ailiance for a Media Literate America, we found that 48 of the 50 states had one or more elements of media education in their core curricular frameworks.[2] (By 2000, all 50 state frameworks incorporated media literacy elements.) These frameworks contribute to a growing legitimacy for media education, which was not nearly so available or widespread only a few years ago. Each state's media education standards can be viewed at http://www.med.sc.edu:81/medialit/statelit.htm.

The 1999 study surprised us, as well as many other U.S. media educators, in that so many states, working independently, had brought media education into their curricular frameworks. The findings speak to the ongoing zeitgeist that recognizes the great and growing need for media education.

The considerable presence of media analysis goals in the areas of health and consumer skills also surprised us. Seventy-four percent of states (37 states) now have media education elements in their health and consumer education frameworks. Ninety-four percent (47 states) have media education elements in English and language and communication arts frameworks, but only 60 percent (30 states) call for media elements in social studies, history, and civics.

These are important developments, and though I believe media education will eventually be part of curricula throughout the United States, it's not going to be achieved easily. Too few graduate programs train teachers to implement media education. To move things along, we need committed teachers, parents, administrators, and members of industry to push for media curricula in the schools. We also need educational leaders to recognize that the way we communicate as a society has changed enough that traditional training in literature and print communication is no longer sufficient. This is not a new revelation. The call for media education in the United States dates back to the 1950s and the 1970s, when many critical viewing programs were developed, if not back to 1916, when psychologist Hugo Munsterberg called for the serious study, in schools, of the new medium of film, which he called "The Photoplay."

> Formal media education in the United States still lags behind every other major English-speaking country in the world.

One of the significant developments in the history of U.S. media education occurred in December 1992 when the Aspen Institute brought 25 educators and activists together for a National Leadership Conference. The group established a definition of media education and a vision for developing it in U.S. education, stating that a media-literate person should be able to *access, analyze, evaluate, and produce both print and electronic media.*

The Aspen Group also proposed the following precepts:

- Media are constructed, and construct reality.
- Media have commercial implications.
- Media have ideological and political implications.
- Form and content are related in each medium, each of which has a unique aesthetic, codes, and conventions.
- Receivers negotiate meaning in media.

Before discussing the Aspen Group's statement, let's take a first cut at answering the question: What *is* media literacy? Media literacy involves critically analyzing media messages; evaluating sources of information for bias and credibility; raising awareness of how media messages influence people's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors; and producing messages using different forms of media.

Why is media education so vitally important?

Let's start with the fact that children throughout the United States, and in an ever-growing proportion of countries around the world, spend an average of three hours each day watching television. At this rate, by the time they reach age 75 they will have spent nine years watching TV. In the United States, they will have spent two of those nine years watching television *ads*.

When we add the number of hours young people spend watching movies, listening to music and radio, and surfing the Internet, they (*and we*) easily devote one-third to one-half of our waking lives to electronic media. Yet many schools still treat poetry, short stories, and the novel as the only forms of English expression worthy of study. As a result, most children are not media literate, so they are poorly equipped to engage actively and think critically about the very media that most affect their lives.

Critical Thinking

Although school systems throughout the United States are mandated to teach critical thinking, if the schools are not linking this skill to the media world in which so many students are spending upwards of six hours a day, they are leaving a potential gold mine unexplored.

Most anyone who has engaged in media literacy instruction knows that, before long, parents will report that their children are no longer watching television in the same way they did before. Indeed, parents often remark that after instruction in media literacy, their children constantly point out things while they watch movies or TV programs. They identify jump cuts, fades, and voiceovers. They detect bias and the power of words to shift meaning and of music to alter the viewer's mood. But what's happening here?

What's happening is that television viewing – which formerly involved relatively passive reception – now involves much more mental activity. Willingly, although without knowing it, the student is now spending a good chunk of those three hours of daily television viewing engaged in critical thinking. And the same thing can happen when they are surfing the Net, listening to radio, watching movies, reading the newspaper, or playing video games. This is not to say that they will be engaged in critical analysis every moment, but they will be using their higher critical faculties much more if they have been given some of the basic tools of media literacy, of media analysis, than if they have not.

Although school systems throughout the United States are mandated to teach critical thinking, if the schools are not linking this skill to the media world in which so many students are spending upwards of six hours a day, they are leaving a potential gold mine unexplored.

And we know of no evidence that more critical appraisal undermines one's enjoyment of television or film. To the contrary, understanding how television shows and film are made enhances enjoyment. In some cases, one's tastes may eventually run to less obvious or more sophisticated material, but there is no reason to expect that a media-literate person can't still enjoy the media and derive pleasure and information simultaneously.

If schools want students to spend more time thinking critically and practicing critical thinking skills, then they are missing the boat if they are not teaching media literacy and using the media as a site for this critical analysis.

Democracy

The Jeffersonian ideal of an informed electorate necessitates media literacy education. This is why Walter Cronkite, among other distinguished journalists, has supported media education for many years – because it teaches critical thinking skills for citizens and future

voters. Research has shown that media literacy activities in social studies classes significantly promote civic participation and increase regular newspaper readership among teenagers. With the incredible rise of the Internet and the unedited nature of many websites, students need more than ever to learn how to assess the validity and credibility of the information to which they are exposed.

No student should leave high school without knowing the classic techniques of persuasion and propaganda, many of which have been taught for decades, but not to all students. Students should be able to recognize "name-calling," "bandwagon," and "glittering generalities" in the arguments they hear and read. But this is only the most basic of beginnings.

Our political life became increasingly mediated in the middle of the last century, and now – certainly in campaigns and elections, and in day-to-day governance – the media could hardly be more crucial to how we view politicians and our leaders, and how we think about the critical issues of the day. Should we go to war? How will we protect the environment? Will we be taxed more or less? These and every other vital question in our democracy are raised and debated, often superficially, in the nation's media. Politicians have become extraordinarily adept at using the media to their advantage. If their interests are in line with the nation's, this can result in effective government. But as often as not, well-intended or not, vast distortions take place in our public life that are partly a function of how our media systems operate.

To the degree that the media are used to propagandize or manipulate and therefore interfere with the public being well informed, we need media education to be part of our schools' civics and social studies classes. No student should leave high school without knowing the classic techniques of persuasion and propaganda, many of which have been taught for decades, but *not* to all students. Students should be able to recognize "name-calling," "bandwagon," and "glittering generalities" in the arguments they hear and read. But this is only the most basic of beginnings.

Health Promotion, Character Education, and Violence Reduction

Media literacy techniques are also being used increasingly in programs designed to promote health and prevent substance abuse among young people. Indeed, the American Academy of Pediatrics has concluded that media education represents "a simple, effective approach to combating the myriad of harmful media messages seen or heard by children and adolescents."[3] To address health threats to children and adolescents, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy have advocated teaching critical analysis of advertisements and other media presentations that promote the use and abuse of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs.

A particularly useful health education assignment involves having groups of middle-school students produce a five-minute videotape on a health topic of their choice, for example, nutrition, exercise, safe sex, or alcohol, drug, or tobacco abuse. The final production is shown to the whole class, if not the whole school, or more widely via public access cable.

Here's what often happens. First, students develop more interest in the research aspects of the project because they are responsible for making a public service announcement (PSA) for their peers and for the larger community. Compared with a written report that only the teacher will see, students making a PSA become very motivated to ensure that the information they convey is accurate. The students learn organizational, research, writing, editing, and production skills. And guess whose PSA other students are more likely to pay attention to and learn from: the government's, the advertising council's, or the ones made by their peers? Such peer-driven media literacy health projects can really bring students alive and help make schoolwork more relevant.

Media literacy approaches can also be used in programs focused on conflict resolution and the reduction of aggression and violence. Middle or high school students can be asked, for example, to view part of a film depicting a growing conflict between two rival gangs in a school. The film is stopped, and the students are then assigned to groups to write the next scene, wherein the characters resolve the conflict through talk, rather than with fists, knives, or guns. The assignment prompts students to think through how a conflict might be peaceably resolved. Then, in sharing their solutions, the class has the opportunity to hear a variety of solutions. This increases the likelihood that some of

these solutions will be mentally available should students become involved in a similar conflict.

Character education and social and emotional learning goals, so important in contemporary education and society, can also be met through media education. Indeed, how would one carry out character education today without having young people think about the values being taught by the media that surround them? Media literacy lessons are readily integrated with the six "pillars" of character education: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. These lessons can help students become much more aware of the values being promulgated by the media relative to their own developing values and those of their family and community.

Now let's spend a moment considering what goals the Aspen Institute had in mind in stating that a media-literate person ought to be able to *access, analyze, evaluate, and produce media*. Why those four verbs?

- **Access.** With the rise of the Internet, access is more important than ever. Not only should students be able to access the World Wide Web, they should also receive instruction in how to assess the value and validity of websites in all areas, whether medical, political, or educational. Now that most anyone can create their own website, a great deal of freedom has been accorded citizens who choose to use it. But with the freedom of the Internet comes a new and increasing demand on our educational systems and on caregivers to help young people use the Internet and all other media – critically and thoughtfully.
- **Analyze.** Analysis involves being able to detect propaganda and to understand that people are always involved in the construction of media messages, and that nearly all media messages are designed to do something, whether it is to inform, entertain, or persuade. Young people and adults alike need to learn how the media construct our understandings of issues, products, people, gender and race, and whole nation-states. Indeed, one "law" of communication is that people are most impressionable and most easily persuaded when they know very little about the topic or issue at hand. People's impressions of other countries and of other peoples are often heavily based in what they have seen, heard, or read in the media. It follows that how people feel about aiding or making war against another country or people rests substantially on political decisions and public opinion, both of which are remarkably influenced by what people know, or *think* they know, via the media.
- **Evaluate.** For people to evaluate the media means learning to appraise the value of media products for themselves and for their society. This is arguably an even more subjective process than analysis, but it is no less important. Media literacy education ought to contribute to an individual's ability to determine the value of any given film, television program, or magazine or newspaper article.

We especially want to encourage students to become autonomous in their assessment of media and to develop their own modes of criticism, interpretation, and evaluation. We may wish to choose and supervise the media exposure of young children, but eventually parents and teachers have to let go and expect them to negotiate the increasingly complex media worlds they inhabit largely on their own. And just as there is no single, correct way to interpret all of literature, there is no single, correct way to interpret all of television or film. The goal of media education should be to provide a grounding on which students can better develop their own idiosyncratic responses.

As important as critical thinking, health, and democracy are, we should not forget that the media convey, or constitute, various forms of artistic expression. Thus, we also want students to become more sophisticated in their appreciation of art forms across all media. Indeed, the educational establishment must recognize that some film and television classics are works of substantial artistry, subtlety, and power. Students may well profit as much from serious instruction in and exploration of the complexity of Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* or the masterful coherence of Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* as from instruction in print versions of *Huckleberry Finn* and *Great Expectations*.

Let me be clear. I am not suggesting that we jettison Twain and Dickens. I *am* saying that other important modes of storytelling have developed that deserve formal study in our schools. Reading and writing remain fundamental. One way to integrate media literacy with traditional literacy is to emphasize writing skills in students' scripts and in their critical reviews of films, TV programs, advertising, and websites.

One way to increase students' interest in literature is to help them recognize that many of the same storytelling techniques used in the classics are also used in the popular programs and films with which they are already familiar. Students already respond to foreshadowing in a television series like *Malcolm in the*

Middle or a movie like *Spiderman*; they are often simply unaware that foreshadowing is a deliberate technique used to heighten suspense, drama, and irony. Knowing the terms and being able to apply them is more important than some might think. Knowing about foreshadowing, symbolism, character development, and other techniques used in literature and in film and television permits greater appreciation of the art forms.

- **Produce.** Students should also be able to produce media. First, being able to create one's own media messages is extraordinarily empowering. Sometimes for the first time in their lives, students see that they, too, can participate in making art or news, a film, a television program, or a website that affects other people. Many students involved in a media production in middle or high school report that it was among the most exciting and motivating experiences of their years in school. Second, by producing media, students learn in a more personal and profound way that media messages are "constructed."

One can show students how the simplest edits in film or television can substantially change the meaning and emotional impact of a scene or of an entire story. Students can learn how easy it is to include or edit out a particular shot, or how the choice of music can make a huge difference in how the audience experiences a character, a moment in a story, or a whole group of people. Showing students these things is an important and necessary part of media literacy instruction, but even better is for the students to become involved in making editorial decisions of their own, deciding for themselves what to leave in or leave out and in what order to present material.

Consider what students learn in the following assignment. A group of 6th graders is assigned to make an audio story about the school's new principal. They are given tape recorders and told to go out and interview the principal, teachers, other students, staff, and custodians and then come back in a week to edit the material down to a three-minute story that will be played for the student body over the school's public address system. What will the students learn? First, they'll learn to sift through one or two hours of interviews to find the few minutes of material that they want to stitch together. They will learn that the vast majority of their raw material never finds its way into the final product. They will learn that they must decide which sound bite is best to include, as well as how long it should play, in what order, and with what narration setting it up. In a nutshell, they will learn how incredibly constructed all such media messages are – every radio or TV news story they hear or view for the rest of their lives.

Note that this assignment can be done with extraordinarily inexpensive and durable equipment. Handheld tape recorders can be purchased for under $20. And an audio editing capability is as close as any tape player with two tape drives. One doesn't need a fully equipped studio or television cameras to involve students in media production.

One obstacle to more rapid acceptance of media education is that some educators remain convinced that the only area appropriate for formal study in English and language arts classes is literature. But there can be little question that the patina of time alone will eventually make the formal study of electronic media acceptable to educational traditionalists. This is why I believe that we can expect media education to become commonplace by the middle of this century, if not before.

More than 2,300 years ago, Plato wrote that a "sound education consists in training people to find pleasure and pain in the right objects." But though most Americans now spend half their leisure time watching television and film, too few schools yet devote formal attention to helping students become more sophisticated media consumers. Let's hope that the picture continues to improve.

Most fundamentally, we need to encourage our nation's future voters and leaders to take the media seriously, to understand where media messages come from and why messages are presented as they are and to what effect. As Charles Brightbill wrote in *The Challenge of Leisure* in 1960, "The future will belong not only to the educated, but to those who have been educated to use leisure wisely."

[1] Kubey, R. (1998). Obstacles to the development of media education in the United States. *Journal of Communication, 48*, 58-69.

[2] Kubey, R. and F. Baker (1999, Oct. 27). Has media literacy found a curricular foothold? *Education Week*, p. 56.

[3] American Academy of Pediatrics (August, 1999). Media Education. Pediatrics, 104, 341-343.

Empowered Parents: Role Models for Taking Charge of TV Viewing

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by Folami Prescott-Adams, Ph.D.

Television is an amazingly powerful communication tool. Its images of culture, family, relationships, and events give us opportunities to socialize, teach, and inspire both children and adults. Empowered parents and communities are responsible for guiding the placement of television in the process of human development. My awareness of television's power and potential began when I was a child and is confirmed when I view it from two current perspectives – parent and scholar.

I enjoyed television as a child, but I had a healthy skepticism about the messages I was receiving. Still, I was very enthusiastic, even way back then, about the potential of all this "stuff" we watch on television as a vehicle for learning. But it wasn't until I started traveling across the country conducting teacher training that my intrigue with the pervasiveness of the media led me to a driving passion to take full advantage of its awesome potential to build community, educate, and inspire.

In city after city, diverse groups of people whose shared experiences were often limited to their job settings became one big happy family when we engaged in media-based activities. During their recollections of catchy tunes and TV characters, they would smile and exude a powerful energy of familiarity and warmth. When I used video clips from a TV show to stimulate discussion, it was hard to keep the group on task. Participants were much more interested in their Archie Bunker memories, whom they fell in love with on the *Brady Bunch*, or singing the lyrics from their favorite commercials. These shared memories helped the groups bond instantaneously. Upon realizing the power of this shared knowledge, I went on to complete a self-designed course of study in film and television production so that I could expand my collection of video content from which to choose in educating, illustrating a point, or representing a point of view.

In my workshops and speeches, I began telling my own stories. Like the night I challenged Yakini, my seven-year-old daughter to question the lyrics she sang while drying off after a bath. "Are you really still dirty because you did not use Zest? Are you *really* only fully clean if you're Zestfully clean?" "Is there really a bee inside our box of Honey Nut Cheerios?" Friends said I was fanatical and needed to just relax and enjoy the entertaining value of television. Some workshop participants argued that we could never expect anything of real value out of television because of its profit motive. Others said that anything of value that came out of television was merely a coincidence. While TV viewing will always provide sheer entertainment, that is merely one gratifying effect. There are many more that we have only begun to explore as a community.

I quietly fumed about the number of parents around me who chose to just "let TV be" in their homes, but my fury was awakened after an incident in Yakini's sixth-grade class. As a parent volunteer, I made weekly

visits to the classroom to read aloud. That morning, I had chosen a story about an interracial friendship. Just a few minutes into the story, excited students began blurting out "*Jungle Fever, Jungle Fever!!*" To my shock, all but two of the students had seen this graphic R-rated film. In my eyes, something had gone terribly wrong. I could not stop thinking of the film's content – explicit sex scenes, infidelity, intense images of drugs on the streets, addiction in the family, and a father compelled to kill his own son.

But then I started trying to identify what was really making me angry. As my own ideas about parenting and media have evolved, I've come to realize that the issue is not so much about what you let your children see. They "see" images such as those in *Jungle Fever* daily on local news and city streets and in the best of dramatic television. The real issue is a parent's answer to this question: How much are you willing to help them understand what they see and what it means? As I continue to question my own children's understanding of what's real, what's not, what teaches, and what inspires, I have never seen media as my enemy. I am not enraged with the media. Instead, I am amazed by the volume of content, the collective creativity used to produce programming, and the feelings media images and sounds have stirred in me. I am an advocate for harnessing the full value of the media. My doctoral studies gave me the opportunity to delve into these issues.

The issue is not so much about what you let your children see... the real issue is a parent's answer to this question: How much are you willing to help them understand what they see and what it means?

Formal Research Observations

In 1996, I conducted several semiformal interviews with a diverse group of parents including, a single mom whose son watched three to four hours of unsupervised TV a day, a couple with two children under six who watched less then five hours of TV a week, and a couple with three children who had limited viewing during the week but could watch as much of whatever they wanted to on the weekend. The range of behaviors across households was a clear indication that parent mediation habits around their children's TV viewing are as varied as the parents themselves. Parent mediation is the act of interpreting, discussing, and recognizing ideas, images, and information with children about television programs.

My dissertation research involved investigating television's influence on ethnic identity development among African-American college students. My goal was to explore three areas:

1. the current media practices among college students and their parents' mediation practices during childhood;
2. the associations between these practices and ethnic identity; and
3. beliefs about effects of television on identity and behavior.

Participants included 222 students from Atlanta-area colleges and universities (public, private, historically black, ethnically diverse, predominantly white, highly competitive, and open enrollment). Each student completed surveys on 1) childhood viewing and parental mediation practices, 2) current viewing practices, and 3) ethnic identity.

Our children's potential to learn and grow from their TV diet is greatly enhanced when we teach them to think and talk about what they see and hear.

Parent Mediation of Television Viewing: Beyond Rules and Stipulations

Students vividly described how they interfaced with television and how their parents interfered with their viewing preferences. Many households had little guidance and no restrictions. Where there was guidance, it leaned toward the restrictive side. Regulation was most common and included a variety of restrictive strategies, such as the following:

- Establishing rules related to TV viewing: when, with whom, where, and how much
- Restricting certain programs and nerworks
- Stipulating conditions related to TV viewing, for example, after chores, homework, extracurricular activities, and outdoor play

Survey respondents reported that their parents restricted programs that featured cursing, sexual references, poor family values, adult themes, and off-color humor. Limiting the amount of television and the times it could be viewed was also common. Many also reported that cable television was perceived as a plethora of child-centered television: Their younger siblings were allowed to watch as much Nickelodeon, PBS, Cartoon Network, and Disney as they liked. However, very few parents watched these shows with their children. In fact, the parents in the study employed very little *active* mediation either with the respondents themselves when they were children or their younger siblings.

Survey respondents spoke about TV programs as a source of role models. Theo of *The Cosby Show* motivated one Morehouse student to go to class each morning.

Active mediation is the intentional viewing and discussion of television content with a child. It includes the following strategies:

- Co-viewing – intentional viewing by parent and child together
- Instructive mediation – the use of TV viewing to reinforce values and critical thinking
- Construction – the selection of specific programs to teach specific lessons and history to children

Active mediation can be positive, when comments tend to reinforce content, or negative, when comments are disapproving of television content. Most of the co-viewing that occurred among the respondents' families was more coincidental than intentional. In the early '90s, for example, *The Cosby Show* was a co-viewing magnet because it attracted both adult and child viewers. When co-viewing did elicit discussion, it was often limited to comments from parents about objectionable content, such as these reported by a student from Emory University:

> Any time there was a cuss word my father would say a grunt or groan, and if there were too many he would change the channel. If there were three [cuss words] he'd change it. Not an adult-themed program but any show that had cursing like "get the hell out."

In addition to sideline commentary, many parents resorted to ineffective mediation strategies such as covering children's eyes during violence and sex. But the children could still hear the dialogue, so their curiosity and fascination with this halfway-forbidden content increased while their understanding of its meaning remained unchanged. As long as parents are involved in discussions with their children while co-viewing – whether the viewing is planned or coincidental – they are actively mediating their children's viewing.

While these strategies are active in that they assert the parents' roles and opinions, they are reactive at best and noncognitive at worst. Noncognitive strategies only limit amount and content; they do not involve thinking about and processing what we and our children view. What we allow our children to watch in these instances goes unquestioned and its message goes unchallenged.

In today's milieu children have access to all kinds of programs that parents may object to but are unable to control absolutely. Many study participants talked about "sneaking," referring to viewing restricted programming when parents are not home, behind closed bedroom doors, while the rest of the family is sleeping, and at the homes of friends and family. Sideline commentary and involvement or alternative activities alone cannot equip children with critical consciousness skills or provide filters they can use to make appropriate viewing decisions or to understand the programming to which they are exposed.

Cognitive Strategies for Parents: Using TV to Foster Critical Thinking

Tools are available that will help parents provide their children with viewing skills by using cognitive mediation strategies for selected blocks of family TV viewing. Cognitive strategies are at the high end of the active mediation continuum. Thoughtful mediation could enhance the positive and reduce the negative impact of media messages on children's sense of self and respect for others. Discriminating viewers will interpret distorted portrayals in ways that lead to fewer unhealthy effects, and they will use television as a tool to raise physically and emotionally healthy children. Cognitive strategies require viewers to think about what they are watching and discuss, interpret, and delve further into the topics or ideas. Cognitive strategies encourage children to think about the content and relate it to the emotions elicited, the information conveyed, and their own range of knowledge. Examples include discussing

the perceived reality of character portrayals, the consequences of actions, motives for behaviors, and parents' evaluations of those behaviors.

My research revealed three types of cognitive strategies:

- General cognitive – reviewing the plot or significance of the program, discussing characters and their qualities, choosing programs together, and engaging in in-depth discussions of programs.
- Construction – careful selection of programs that reflect beliefs and desired behaviors upheld by parents, historical markers, cultural references, and insight.
- Critical consciousness – a tool for understanding social forces and conditions, including media literacy, which is the ability to interpret and create personal meaning from media's symbols and sounds.

Many effects of TV viewing can be enhanced by cognitive mediation strategies. Just the other night, my 15-year-old son suggested that his sixth-grade brother could not be learning anything in class if all he was doing was watching various films. He went on to describe conditions for learning, which included taking notes, engaging in discussion, and being tested on the content. Even though he ended his rant with a "just kidding," there is some truth to his tirade. Our children's potential to learn and grow from their TV diet is greatly enhanced when we teach them to think and talk about what they see and hear.

Survey respondents spoke about TV programs as a source of role models. Theo of *The Cosby Show* motivated one Morehouse student to go to class each morning. George Jefferson was and still is an entrepreneurial example for some, as well as "the king of slamming doors". Once Steve Urkel became cool, one student aspired to emulate him. Many admitted to mimicking Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and other characters, while a few spoke of out-of-control consumerism and obesity as effects of nonmediated TV viewing. The bottom line appears to come back to the parents' perception of their role and how they respond to the big box in the corner of the living room. Developing cognitive strategies gives parents a tool for doing their job as their children's ultimate teachers of values, identity, and community.

So, how do you actually *do* cognitive mediation? It's actually quite simple. The following questions provide a solid foundation for critical analysis of any program.

1. What did you see/hear?
2. Tell me about the main characters (personality, lifestyle, motives, and relationships). Which characters do you connect with and why?
3. What values are represented by the content?
4. How do you feel about the content?
5. Who created this message and why are they sending it?
6. What production decisions were made long before the program was available to us?
7. How would you have told the story differently?
8. How might different people understand this message differently from you?

When watching the news, consider the stories that were not selected and the criteria that went into choosing top stories. Discuss the perspective of those interviewed and how the reporter may have chosen them and missed others. When watching music videos, talk about the relationship between the words and images and what the images reflect. Challenge your children to note behaviors and styles that are mimicked in the community.

Co-viewing magnets are ideal programs to use in building cognitive skills from TV viewing. My family watches *The Bernie Mac Show* and *Malcolm in the Middle*, and their ratings and reviews suggest they are co-viewing magnets in many other homes as well. Both shows use unusual production styles to deliver their messages, such as Bernie Mac's direct conversations with his audience and the pop-up bubbles that provide characters' inner feelings, cultural references, or the journey of a germ from cold-giver to cold-getter. Malcolm also talks directly to his audience to add teenage perspective and humorous insight into a given situation. Both programs are great catalysts for discussions of household rules, parent and child responsibilities, and the ups and downs of family living. Combined use of co-viewing, construction, and critical thinking can turn an hour of viewing into much more than fun and laughter. However, it is up to the parents to shape the outcome of those rare moments when the family views together. The most difficult part of being a cognitive mediator may be feeling empowered to make it happen.

Empowered Parents: Role Models for Taking Charge

"Media is like a weapon. In the right hands, it can help a community thrive and prosper and in the

wrong hands, you're gonna die from it." "N", 27, Georgia State University

One of my most interesting research findings centered on practices of politically active parents. Those who had been or still were involved in civil rights or African-American political movements stood out as active mediators of their children's TV viewing. I was particularly interested in the potential value of constructing a media diet in the home, and this group of parents have been doing so for some time. While some students resented the force-fed TV programs at the time, in retrospect they were extremely appreciative of their parents' take-charge approach. Several students mentioned that their parents insisted that they watch *Roots*, the ground-breaking mini-series that tells the story of enslaved Africans in the United States. They said the program had a lasting effect on their sense of identity, historical perspective, sense of honor for their ancestors, and appreciation of current conditions. In addition to these positive effects of construction, cognitive mediation builds critical thinking skills, independent thinking, and interests in a variety of activities outside of electronic media.

My findings echo those reported in Kids @ the New Millennium, a 1999 study funded by the Kaiser Family Foundation, which assessed the media consumption of a sample of 61 percent whites and 29 percent from other ethnic groups. Sixty-five percent of participating youth (ages 8–18) had a TV in their bedroom, 69 percent had three or more TVs in their home, 30 percent had cable or satellite in their bedroom, and 15 percent had HBO or other premium channels. Prime time had the highest percentage of co-viewing, with 62 percent watching with someone else. Yet, for 63 percent of that group, the "someone else" was a sibling. These statistics suggest that similar media practices are found across diverse groups, making the proactive strategies offered here promising for the community at large. Certainly, parents whose activism plays out in political, spiritual, educational, and/or cultural settings have established a sense of empowerment that affects the choices they make for family viewing and mediation of that viewing.

We can learn a great deal from empowered parents about taking charge of our TV consumption and viewing patterns. Empowerment starts with a realization that we as parents *can* take charge of our children's consumption of TV. Parents can have a sense of control and be consistent because the entire family discusses and agrees on viewing expectations. From this perspective, media can help a community thrive. We die when we give in and believe our efforts are useless. If we take in all the images we consume with no thought, acknowledged reaction, or discussion, we might as well be dead.

My 6- and 11-year-old sons just finished watching *The Famous Jett Jackson*, followed by *Boy Meets World*. Since they each get to select 2.5 hours of programming during the school week, they are careful to choose programs they truly enjoy. This practice probably puts me on the high end of restrictive mediation. And I'm not alone. Shifts in priorities among parents, the availability of hours of guilt-free, "innocuous" children's programming (Nickelodeon, Disney, PBS, etc.), and extraordinary access to all types of media can clog the filters parents use to mediate their children's viewing. But these noncognitive strategies focus only on when and how much they watch. If we fail to consider the use of cognitive strategies that allow us to take full advantage of the educational, developmental, and inspirational benefits of viewing, we will miss valuable opportunities to learn with our children. If we work to optimize the positives, we will find televised sources of values and identity. The process of mediation has the amazingly powerful side effect of building a sense of community.

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Call to Action: Parents Take the Lead

"[The study] made me remember a time where evaluating TV shows was a responsibility my mom took on and now that I'm older and need to do it more myself. It made me think I need to get back into that and look deeper and not just take what I see at face value. If you don't practice it, you lose it. It made me want to get back into that more." "N", 27, Georgia State University

This call to action is targeted to parents, not teachers. That makes sense, since the television set is central in most living rooms and a sidebar in the classroom.

The following are feasible actions for any concerned parent to implement at home:

- **Assess your mediation practices.**
  Using the questions below, get a better sense of what your children watch and your own level of interaction with their viewing.
  1. Do I select programming for family viewing that instructs and inspires?
  2. Are there established household rules around when and how much can be viewed?
  3. Am I familiar with the programs my children watch regularly? Have I watched them enough to discuss characters and ongoing story lines with my children?
  4. Do I watch TV with my children on a regular basis?
  5. Do I engage my children in discussion about programs viewed?
  6. Do we discuss the believability of characters portrayed and the consequences of their actions, motives for behaviors, and our evaluation of those behaviors?
  7. Do I engage in sideline commentary? Negative or positive?
  8. Do we talk about the making of TV programs (production aspects, business, casting, etc.)?
- **Provide a weekly menu of shows from which to choose.**
  The Web allows for searches for specific specials, movies and episodes. Post family programming options in a central location and allow the children to help select from those programs. Establish a set of questions that will serve as a foundation for discussion that builds critical thinking and media literacy skills.
- **Commit to one hour a week of cognitive TV.**
  Cognitive TV incorporates guided discussion and identification of the values, ideas, and information conveyed. What you choose to watch in that hour is less important than committing to using cognitive mediation strategies during or after viewing.
- **Network with other families.**
  When small groups of families share their practices, their patterns are reinforced and tested. I have an informal network of friends that I can call on to review a film or TV program, particularly for its educational value or its appropriateness for children. We also call each other to share noteworthy programs when we discover them, often calling just as the show begins. Friends do not always agree, so my children have also been exposed to a healthy range of parent regulations around TV viewing. One of the most meaningful ways we have supported each other is by taking the time to preview or co-view. Here are some ideas to direct these support groups:
  - Use each other to check on appropriateness of TV programs.
  - Meet periodically to talk about newly discovered programs that can lead to interesting family conversation or that relate to household challenges.
  - Recognize those who take the time to seek out programs that stimulate learning and discussion.
- **Organize viewing parties.**
  Put together multifamily gatherings at which viewing is a coordinated activity. For me, most viewing parties began spontaneously when a child decided to turn on the TV at a social event. However, the discussion that ensued was so engaging to both parents and children that I knew we were on to something. Recently, the 25th anniversary of *Roots* prompted me to organize a series of viewing parties. Many teens have informed me that they've never seen the program. Each viewing was followed with questions and answers, discussion, an expert guest where possible, and reading assignments. Special events and holidays are also excellent jump-off points for thematic viewing. We watched the HBO film *Boycott* as a family on Martin Luther King Day and then discussed it with other families a few days later.

In Conclusion

I challenge you to use the tools presented here, share the ideas, and, if nothing else, talk about the issues with others. Television is an amazingly powerful communication tool. By staying tuned and staying aware and active, we can take advantage of that power.

Media Literacy and Prevention: Going Beyond "Just Say No"

Lynda Bergsma is assistant professor in the College of Public Health at the University of Arizona, associate director of the Rural Health Office, and director of the Media Wise Initiative, which she established in 1992. She combines her extensive background in mass communications, public health, education, and sociology to plan and implement programs, develop curricula, provide training and consulting services, and conduct research on the impact of our media culture on public health issues and on media literacy as a prevention strategy. She recently participated in the Media Literacy Summit, organized by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy's Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, to develop a document of findings titled *Helping Youth Navigate the Media Age: A New Approach to Drug Prevention*. She is a founding board member and vice president of the Alliance for a Media Literate America.

by Lynda Bergsma, Ph.D.

The Influence of Our Media Culture on Health Behavior

Today most prevention practitioners and researchers, as well as concerned teachers and parents, recognize that many of the messages we get from the media are risk factors for numerous public health problems. From the time we wake up to the radio alarm clock to the time we fall asleep with the TV on, we live in a media culture. We cannot escape the media's influence on either our healthy or unhealthy behaviors.

Numerous studies over the past five decades have examined the impact of media on children, with regard to such risky behaviors as violence; alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse; poor body image and eating disorders; precocious, unsafe sexual activity; and teen pregnancy. More than 1,000 studies have looked at the effects of violence in television and movies, including the three-year National Television Violence Study completed in 1998. Most of these studies conclude that children who watch significant amounts of television and movie violence are more likely than children who see less media violence to exhibit aggressive behavior, attitudes, and values.[1] A study of ninth graders in San Jose, California, found that increased television and music video viewing are risk factors for the onset of alcohol use in adolescents. The study recommended that attempts to prevent adolescent alcohol use should address the adverse influences of alcohol use in the media.[2] Another study found that seventh- and ninth-graders were more likely to approve of premarital sex after watching MTV for less than one hour.[3]

> Nearly three out of four (72%) teens think sex on TV influences the sexual behaviors of kids their age "somewhat" or "a lot"; but just one in four (22%) think it influences their own behavior.

The media are so pervasive that youth, in particular, do not perceive their influence. The original media guru, Marshall McLuhan, once said that we don't know who first discovered water, but it probably wasn't the fish. And leading media influence activist Jean Kilbourne says ironically that young boys wearing Budweiser caps often tell her that the media don't influence them.[4] Youth consistently underestimate the media's influence on them. A May 2002 survey on teens, sex and TV shows that nearly three out of four (72%) teens think sex on TV influences the sexual behaviors of kids their age "somewhat" or "a lot"; but just one in four (22%) think it influences their own behavior.[5] Influences are all the more powerful when we do not readily perceive them and cannot erect mental barriers against them.

Besides the pervasiveness of the media, there are neurological reasons that we do not perceive the influence of the media. Brain research demonstrates that we respond to images (the stock and trade of the mass communications media) differently than we respond to print. When we read books, we process the text in the neocortex (the higher cognitive thinking levels of the brain), and the process is slow and thoughtful. When we process images, we do it in the limbic system (a part of the brain so old that it is called the reptilian system), and the process is very rapid, through instinct, impulse, and emotion. This is the same part of the brain that produces the fight-or-flight response, which gets our adrenalin pumping without our conscious thought.

Media literacy allows youth to reflect on important life choices and make decisions about their health behaviors. It allows young people to control the influences of media messages, instead of being controlled by them.

So, for example, when I have had my dinner and my tummy is nice and full, and I sit down to watch a little TV and see an ad for pizza, how do I respond? Do I process the image in my neocortex as follows: "What pizza company is advertising? It looks so juicy that they must have put at least double cheese on there and painted a little oil on it to make it look shiny for the videotaping. Even though I've just had my supper and I don't really want anything to eat, what are the techniques the ad is using to make me want that pizza?" Or do I process the image in my limbic system, where my rapid, instinctual, physical response is to salivate without even thinking and my irrational impulse is to want that pizza now, even though I'm not the least bit hungry?

The first response is what we call a critical thinking response. Critical thinking is essential to media literacy as a prevention strategy. The goal of media literacy in prevention is to move our responses to media images out of the limbic system and into the neocortex, where we can respond more thoughtfully and carefully to the messages the images are giving us. Media literacy allows youth to reflect on important life choices and make decisions about their health behaviors. It allows young people to control the influences of media messages, instead of being controlled by them.

Some of my recent curriculum evaluation research in media literacy and tobacco use prevention clearly demonstrates how much youth need media literacy information and skills.[6] We pre- and posttested 589 middle-school students to measure their knowledge before and after implementing the *Blowing Smoke* program, a media literacy-based curriculum of five lessons designed to discover and analyze the influence of tobacco use images in movies popular with youth. The pretest baseline measures were most revealing. Thirty percent of the students were aware of tobacco portrayal in the movies, and 35 percent already had negative attitudes about tobacco use in the movies. They gain such knowledge and attitudes from many tobacco use prevention programs. But only 18 percent of the students had some understanding that tobacco product placement in movies is really advertising and does not happen by chance. The rest thought that, unlike TV, movies were free of advertising. Media literacy knowledge and skills are required to identify examples of product placement and understand the concept – that it is a kind of stealth advertising and that it has economic support and outcomes.

Thirty percent of the students were aware of tobacco portrayal in the movies, and 35 percent already had negative attitudes about tobacco use in the movies. They gain such knowledge and attitudes from many tobacco use prevention programs. But only 18 percent of the students had some understanding that tobacco product placement in movies is really advertising and does not happen by chance.

Public Health Prevention Perspective 101

The goal of prevention in public health is to stop or moderate major human dysfunctions. Prevention efforts try to counteract the potential precursors of dysfunction, called *risk factors*, and reinforce the potential precursors of health, called *protective factors*. Risk factors are variables, such as poor school performance, that are associated with a high probability of developing risky behaviors. Protective factors refer to conditions, such as having media literacy skills, that improve people's resistance to risk factors.

Prevention Approaches

Traditional prevention approaches, including social marketing through the media and intervention programs like Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE), focus on changing individual behavior. From this perspective, risk factors are in the individual. The obese person, for example, is viewed as lacking the willpower to say no to food and to exercise more frequently. The individual approach places most of its emphasis on providing education, knowledge, and skills to help people say no. Unfortunately, this approach has proved to be too simplistic and woefully inadequate. This is evidenced by the fact that even though they receive lots of information from their schools and the media about the unhealthy consequences of tobacco use, 6,000 young people try a cigarette each day, and 3,000 go on to be regular smokers.[7]

Today's prevention models keep traditional/individual approaches in the prevention toolbox, but they emphasize the environmental, social, political, and cultural factors that encourage risky behavior and act as barriers to changing individual risky behavior. The media constitute just such a factor. Television, radio, movies, magazines, the Internet, videogames, billboards, and bumper stickers fill our environment with social, political, and cultural messages – some healthy and many unhealthy. Successful prevention strategies must address the influence of the media, as well as attempt to change individual behavior. For example, while encouraging the potentially obese child to decrease energy intake and increase energy expenditure, we could also take some of the following actions, many of which are drawn from a much longer list recommended by Nestle and Jacobson.[8]

- Restrict advertising of high-calorie, low-nutrient foods on television shows commonly watched by children, or require broadcasters to provide equal time for messages promoting healthy eating and physical activity.
- Require print advertisements to disclose the calorie content of the foods they are marketing.
- Eliminate the sale of soft drinks, candy bars, and foods high in calories, fat, or sugars in schools.
- Integrate media literacy throughout the comprehensive health curriculum standards in each state, as well as other appropriate curricular areas such as language arts and social studies.
- Require and fund daily physical education and sports programs in primary and secondary schools.
- Provide funding and other incentives for bicycle paths, recreation centers, swimming pools, safe parks, and sidewalks.
- Levy city, state, or federal taxes on soft drinks and other foods high in calories, fat, or sugar to fund a campaign for good nutrition and physical activity – the approach used in tobacco use prevention.

We have a lot to learn in the science of prevention, but one thing we do know is that it is a complex subject requiring complex solutions. As a result, prevention is a difficult practice for many people, including legislators and policymakers, who are looking for a "quick fix" at the lowest cost.

Media Literacy as a Prevention Strategy

Studying the long-term effects of teaching students media literacy skills is a complex and expensive task. We need much more research in the area of media literacy education and prevention. Some of the short-term research and an abundance of anecdotal evidence from teachers, parents, media literacy professionals, and prevention specialists, however, suggest that media literacy works.

> Media literacy helps children and adolescents gain skills to intelligently navigate the media and filter the hundreds of messages they receive every day. Simply put, media literacy is the ability to "ask questions about what you watch, see and read." Media literacy can help youth understand how media are developed, the approaches used to increase persuasion, the commercial sources and beneficiaries of advertising, and the ideology of messages contained in commercial and news media.[9]

When they recognize how media messages influence them, students can develop the skills they need to

carefully reflect on the messages that portray risky lifestyle choices like smoking as glamorous, rebellious, or "cool." Interestingly, my own research with youth and discussions with media literacy educators suggest that simply telling youth that they are influenced by the media doesn't work. They must have the chance to explore the concept under the guidance of teachers and parents who fully understand the concepts of media literacy and have the patience to allow youth to discover for themselves the extent to which they are influenced by the media. This process can be facilitated through a number of media literacy exercises that lead students through the process of personal discovery.

When they recognize how media messages influence them, students can develop the skills they need to carefully reflect on the messages that portray risky lifestyle choices like smoking as glamorous, rebellious, or "cool."

It is exasperating to see youngsters' eyes glaze over when someone tells them that they are influenced by the media and exciting to see the light come on in their eyes when they go through a co-learning process with a teacher/facilitator to discover the influence of media for themselves. On one of my research projects, I asked a young college girl to facilitate small groups of girls aged 13 to 15 years to focus on the influence of media on their ideas about romance, love, and relationships between men and women. During the early focus groups she tended to *tell* the girls that they were influenced by the media, but they resisted this idea so vociferously that it interfered with the whole focus of the group. They could not get past GO. So we worked together to develop better listening and probing strategies to help the girls discover for themselves the amount of influence they received from the media. When the facilitator used these strategies in subsequent groups, the girls were not so resistant and were much better able to analyze the media messages they were getting about male/female relationships and how much their own behavior and ideas were influenced by them. It was an "aha" moment.

When youth learn to analyze the messages communicated by advertising, entertainment, and news media, they can uncover the values and points of view embedded in the messages and decide whether to accept or reject them. Learning to evaluate messages for accuracy, reliability, purpose, and bias gives students better information and tools with which to make decisions about their health risk behaviors. This is the focus of a number of comprehensive health curriculum standards in many states. In the short term, we believe that media knowledge and literacy skills will better enable youth to make healthy choices, even in the face of the barrage of unhealthy messages they receive from the media. In the long term, those in the media literacy movement in the United States believe that if we become a media-literate population and thus change the way we respond to the media, the media will also change for the better.

You must be media literate to help children be media literate. Teachers and parents must become media literate themselves so they can guide the development of media literacy in their students and children.

What Can You Do?

In the 2002 movie *Simone*, Al Pacino's character says to his digitized, virtual actress creation, Simone, "We have entered into a new dimension. Our ability to manufacture fraud has exceeded our ability to detect it." To which Simone replies, "I am the death of real." What can teachers, parents, and prevention specialists do to help children and adolescents navigate this kind of media culture? In its definition of media literacy, the Alliance for a Media Literate America declares that "Media literacy [is] an essential life-skill for the 21st century ."[10] Here are some suggestions for fostering that skill in our young people.

- **You must be media literate to help children be media literate.** Teachers and parents must become media literate themselves so they can guide the development of media literacy in their students and children. Recognize that media literacy is a critical thinking life skill that requires significant learning and practice time to master. Even though the media may seem trivial sometimes, it is no trivial task to become media literate. For information, ideas, and resources,

start by checking out the following websites: www.medialit.org, www.media-awareness.ca, and www.amlainfo.org.

- **Familiarize yourself with youth media and culture.** Listen to their music, look at the websites they frequent, watch what they are watching on TV, and go to a teen movie once in a while. This will help you keep up with the rapidly changing world of youth media and culture and will give you credibility when you talk to kids about media and media literacy. You can also learn a lot about the media from youngsters. Take a co-learning approach to media literacy. In my workshops with both adults and youth, I often find they have more to teach me than I have to teach them.
- **Remember that media literacy is not media bashing.** Feel free to acknowledge your pleasure and that of youth in media use. Youth culture, especially, is closely identified with media and pop culture. Adults must validate and acknowledge young people's experiences and familiarity with their media culture before youth will accept and apply media literacy skills to the messages they consume daily.
- **Start media literacy as soon as children start watching TV.** Parents should start early with their children to experience media together and begin rudimentary analysis. Children are especially vulnerable to the impact of advertising. A recent study out of Stanford University found that one 30-second commercial can influence the brand choices of children as young as two years, and repeated exposures to ads are even more effective. Monitor your child's media consumption and engage in a continuing dialogue about the media messages. Ask them how an ad is different from a program and discuss the purpose of each. Talk to them about their favorite characters' actions and the real-life consequences of those actions, which are often not seen in the media. Help them distinguish between what is real and what is not. Watching five bears on the screen all dancing in unison, my four-year-old son asked his father, "Daddy, which one is the real bear?" He was already media literate enough to suspect that there was one real bear and the others were copies.
- **Integrate media literacy skills in all curricular areas.** Language arts, social studies, and health are particularly appropriate, but media literacy skills have a place in history, geography, math, and science. A wonderful resource is *12 Basic Principals for Incorporating Media Literacy into any Curriculum* from Project Look Sharp at Ithaca College (http://www.ithaca.edu/looksharp). Teachers can also view media literacy–based lessons for all curricular areas at www.media-awareness.ca.
- **Get kids involved in media production.** Creating and producing their own media messages is a powerful strategy for helping youth internalize media literacy skills. This activity can be a "hook" to get them involved in media literacy and prevention programs. Put a video or still camera in their hands, give them an audio recorder, and teach them how to use software programs for creating graphics, animating, and editing. As they make media messages, guide them in the principles of media literacy that fit in with their experiences.
- **Give youth the power to make healthy decisions.** Not all kids are influenced by media messages in the same way. Nor are they passive dupes who are victimized by the media. Children bring different backgrounds to their experiences with the media, and they construct their own values and beliefs in active negotiation with these messages. Help them realize their power to accept healthy media messages, challenge unhealthy messages, and make good decisions for themselves.

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Parents and Teachers: Team Teaching Media Literacy

Milton Chen is executive director of the George Lucas Educational Foundation (GLEF), which creates media – films, books, newsletters, and a website (glef.org) – to promote success stories in education and the use of technology. Prior to joining GLEF in 1998, he was center director of the KQED Center for Education & Lifelong Learning (PBS-San Francisco), delivering educational services for teachers, parents, and community groups in support of public TV programming. He is the executive editor of *Edutopia: Success Stories for Teaching in the Digital Age*, author of *The Smart Parent's Guide to Kids' TV*, co-editor of *Children and Microcomputers: Research on the Newest Medium*, and author of numerous articles on educational media. His work has received honors from the Congressional Black Caucus, PBS, Sesame Workshop, the International Communication Association, and Parents' Choice Foundation.

Sarah Armstrong, director of content at the George Lucas Educational Foundation (GLEF), has been an educator for nearly 30 years. Her classroom experience included integrating technology and telecommunications into the curriculum in the early 1980s. She also worked as an independent consultant on a variety of projects, including professional development, curriculum design, issues of information literacy, and storytelling and technology. She is the author or co-author of several books, including *A Pocket Tour of Kidstuff on the Internet* and *NetSavvy: Information Literacy in the Communications Age*. She contributed a piece to *Future Courses: A Compendium of Thought about Education, Technology, and the Future*. She also serves on the boards of the National Storytelling Network and the Center for Accessible Technology. She is an associate of the Thornburg Center for Professional Development and a frequent national and international speaker. She has been awarded a Gold Disk by California's CUE (Computer-Using Educators, Inc.).

Roberta Furger is currently a writer for the George Lucas Educational Foundation. A journalist for more than 20 years, she has written extensively on technology, education, and parenting issues for a variety of national publications, including *Parade, Working Woman, PC World, Family Circle, Family PC, Family Life*, and *Child*. Her work has received numerous regional and national awards. Ms. Furger is the author of *Does Jane Compute? Preserving Our Daughters' Place in the Cyber Revolution* and is a contributor to *Edutopia: Success Stories for Learning in the Digital Age*, a publication of the George Lucas Educational Foundation.

by Milton Chen, Ph.D., Sarah Armstrong, Ph.D., and Roberta Furger

When it comes to media, our children are mass consumers.

On average, each of them spends 1,500 hours a year watching television. Roughly 17 million children and teens have Internet access in their homes, and most of them use it daily for everything from researching school projects to playing online games to sending instant messages or chatting with their classmates. They go to movies and watch music videos. Headphones and CD players have become so much a part of the middle and high school students' "uniform" that backpacks are now designed to accommodate the gear.

But for all their exposure to mass media, American youth and teens spend precious little time analyzing the messages they're bombarded with every day.

"The reality is that our kids are in constant contact with the media," says Daniel Rossi, director of the Midtown Manhattan campus of Satellite Academy, a four-year public high school with four New York City

locations, who is an advocate for media literacy education. "Their opinions – about violence, about commercialism, about issues of race and gender – are often developed as a result of the media images around them," he adds, "but many aren't even aware of it until they slow down and analyze the process."

Although few states require the teaching of media literacy, educators throughout the country are introducing classroom and even schoolwide initiatives designed to increase students' awareness and analysis of the media that surround them.

Rossi and his colleagues at Satellite Academy are part of a small but growing cadre of parents, educators, and concerned individuals and groups working to promote media literacy at home and at school and to bridge the "digital disconnect" between the media-saturated home lives of children and their use and understanding of media at school. They're sponsoring programs and workshops for teachers and parents, many of whom are struggling to keep pace with ever-changing technology. And they're creating an interdisciplinary curriculum to provide students of all ages with the skills to move from being passive consumers of media to critical listeners, viewers, readers, and producers of all types of media.

These efforts couldn't happen at a more critical time, says Bob McCannon, director of the New Mexico Media Literacy Project, which creates media literacy curricula and works with parents and teachers to further their understanding of this area. "Teaching adults and children how to analyze the media is an essential survival skill for the 21st century," he says. And as more adults – such as parents, teachers, and staff in community-based programs – work together to address children's media literacy, a more comprehensive approach can evolve to address students' media literacy at home, in school, and in after-school and summer programs.

Although few states require the teaching of media literacy, educators throughout the country are introducing classroom and even schoolwide initiatives designed to increase students' awareness and analysis of the media that surround them.

Video Production as a Path to Media Literacy

In New York City, the Educational Video Center (EVC) is working with teachers, parents, and community organizers to teach students video documentary production as a path to media analysis. Advocates of media literacy believe the best way to become media literate is to produce media and engage in the editorial choices that professional producers and journalists make. Students quickly learn that media products have a point of view and often use persuasive techniques. At Rossi's Satellite Academy, students and teachers have been engaged in media production and analysis for more than a decade. Through interdisciplinary units, students learn to analyze everything from print advertisements to television news stories and music videos. These skills then become the foundation for their own video productions.

Although most of EVC's work is with teachers and students, their parents, friends, and community members join in the dialog during end-of-term screenings of student work and through portfolio roundtables during which students present and comment on their work to a small group of teachers, peers, EVC staff, and others. These events offer parents the opportunity to celebrate their children's successes, as well as to further their own understanding of the impact of media.

As part of a three-year United States Department of Education–funded initiative, students and teachers at Satellite Academy are now working with EVC staff to examine media violence and its impact on their lives. In one group, for example, students analyzed a music video about a young woman who chooses to stay in an abusive relationship. After talking about the video – and about violence in the music industry in general – students decided to create an alternative ending to the video. In the student project, the young woman asserts herself and leaves her abuser.

"Many of our students say that once they participate in our program they can never consume media in the same way again," says EVC Media Educator Amy Melnick. "When students shoot and edit a videotape, they learn that all media is a manipulation of choices every step of the way."

Teaching Students to Deconstruct Media

Halfway across the country in Farmington, New Mexico, eighth-graders at Heights Middle School take a nine-week class on media literacy in which they explore

such issues as the tools of persuasion (humor, flattery, romance, symbols, and the like), the effect of advertising on smoking and drinking among youth, and biases in news articles and shows.

English teacher turned media literacy instructor Jill Ward began teaching the class after attending a conference presented by the New Mexico Media Literacy Project. She's seen firsthand how engaged the students are in discussing and analyzing the media. In one lesson students analyze advertising by cereal companies – on the box, on the Web, in the grocery store, and on TV. The lesson culminates with a project in which students create their own cereal campaign – from identifying the target market to analyzing nutrition information to creating puzzles and games for the back of the box.

The unit is designed to help students "gain an appreciation for the manipulation that goes on in advertising," says Ward. "I want them to analyze what they see and hear and come to their own conclusions based on logic, rather than emotion."

To further the conversation about media literacy at home, educators from the New Mexico Media Literacy Project hold workshops for parents while they are working with students and teachers. "We try to saturate a community with information," says Director McCannon, so everyone – parents, teachers, and students – is focused on media literacy.

Parent nights and handouts help raise parents' awareness, says Ward. But, she adds, the most effective tool for stimulating discussions at home has been the students' own enthusiasm for the topic. "Students take videos I show in class home so their parents can watch them," she says. "They talk about these issues all the time. Parents say they can't watch TV anymore without their kids analyzing every commercial."

Begin the Conversation

Talking about the media children are watching, reading, and listening to is one of the most critical steps toward media literacy, says Shelley Pasnick, producer of a new PBS website for parents titled Growing With Media.

It's particularly important that parents have regular, ongoing conversations with their kids, asserts Pasnick. "Ask questions about what they're watching. Talk to them about what they're learning, what they're curious about."

It's not enough, though, to just talk to children about the media they're *consuming*. Parents, teachers, and other interested adults need to give them opportunities to become *creators* of their own media – and then to talk about those experiences, too.

"Everything we see, read, or listen to is the result of someone's creative work," says Pasnick. "The more our children participate in the creative process, the greater chance they have to understand what's involved and the more they'll realize that nothing is preordained, nothing just appeared."

To further the conversation about media literacy at home, educators from the New Mexico Media Literacy Project hold workshops for parents while they are working with students and teachers.

Starting Now

Are you ready to begin the journey to media literacy? Here are some steps educators, parents, community leaders, librarians, and others can take to bring media literacy to homes and schools.

- **Institute a Family Media Diet.** Parents should plan their family's media consumption in the same way they plan meals to achieve a balanced diet. The three basic tenets of a family media diet are (1) control total consumption, (2) create a balanced media diet, and (3) actively use media for analysis and discussion.
- **Take a break from media.** One of the best ways to appreciate the impact of media on our lives is to live without it. Classes, schools, families, and communities should consider "doing without" all media from time to time and then reflecting on the results. Since so much of media use is habitual, students rarely have a chance to view their media consumption with "fresh eyes."
- **Incorporate media literacy into the existing curriculum.** Have students assess the accuracy and value of information in the learning resources they use, from books and periodicals to websites. Have students consider questions such as, Who is the intended audience for this resource? What is the author's point of view? How was this work funded? What might be inherent influences and biases based on the author's background and previous work, organizational affiliation, or funding source?

When educators, parents, and community leaders work together as a team to promote media literacy as the 21st-century form of print literacy, incorporating the skills of thinking, reading, and writing, they will be sending a powerful and coordinated message to this "media generation."

- **Use the media themselves as an object of study.** Studying the history and development of American and world media can be a fascinating topic in English or social studies classes. Media studies can lead to creative, interdisciplinary projects addressing such wide-ranging topics as journalism coverage of historical events; the science and technology of radio, TV, and now the Internet; and the psychological impact of media on children and adults.
- **Have students make multimedia about media.** With the availability of low-cost computers and editing software, many more students are making their own media products – short films, music videos, PowerPoint presentations – about media. This work is being done for projects in schools and community groups, and informally at home, for fun. In making a media presentation, students must make many of the same editorial choices that professional writers, editors, and producers make when publishing a newspaper or magazine or making a radio or TV show. Students learn that media production is an exercise in selecting content and shaping, revising, and polishing the media product. Students can present their projects at a community event involving parents, teachers, and local businesses and organizations.
- **Consult with librarians on media literacy.** Librarians in school and public libraries can be excellent bridges between the home and school, offering resources, materials, and questions to talk about.
- **Continue the conversation.** When adults talk with each other about children, they often ignore the one experience dominating young people's lives – media use. When educators, parents, and community leaders work together as a team to promote media literacy as the 21st-century form of print literacy, incorporating the skills of thinking, reading, and writing, they will be sending a powerful and coordinated message to this "media generation."

Media Literacy Across the Curriculum

An Australian, David Considine moved to the United States 25 years ago to study mass media, as a result of watching the influence of U.S. media on his Australian students. He is the author of *Visual Messages: Integrating Imagery into Instruction*. He also coordinates the graduate program in Media Literacy at Appalachian State University and is serving as chair of the National Media Education Conference, scheduled for Baltimore in summer 2003. He has served as a media literacy consultant for the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy for the Clinton and Bush administrations.

by David M. Considine, Ph.D.

If we regard truth as something handed down from authorities on high, the classroom will look like a dictatorship. If we regard truth as a fiction determined by personal whim, the classroom will look like anarchy. If we regard truth as emerging from a complex process of mutual inquiry, the classroom will look like a resourceful and interdependent community.

From *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*, by Parker Palmer [1]

Exactly two decades ago, in his book *Megatrends*, John Naisbitt presented a compelling argument that challenged the business and education communities to respond meaningfully to America's transition from an industrial society to an information society. Despite a potentially revolutionary wave of hardware and software, Naisbitt argued that we were, as a nation and a society, "drowning in information but starved for knowledge."[2]

Twenty years later, we live in a media-saturated society. Young people in the United States have access to more forms of information and entertainment than any culture in the history of the world. The information contained, carried, and conveyed in traditional and emerging media formats may either support or subvert children and adolescents on their odyssey to adulthood.

If they are to fully harness the power and potential of exciting new technologies and multimedia, our students must be offered the critical criteria and information skills necessary for them to become intelligent, competent consumers and creators of media messages. In short, they must become media literate.

The ability to access information does not make one media literate. Knowledge and information should not be confused. Knowledge implies critical awareness: the ability to comprehend, evaluate, verify, validate, compare, contrast, accept, or reject information based on clearly defined critical criteria.

It also includes the ability to recognize and understand patterns, themes, and relationships, whether manifested in a novel, a play, a motion picture, or in the ebb and flow of political discourse and debate that marks a healthy democracy.

In *Megatrends*, Naisbitt wondered if the media helped or hurt the way we saw ourselves and the wider world. "We seem," he said, "to be a society of events, just moving from one incident – sometimes, even crisis – to the next, rarely pausing (or caring) to notice the process going on underneath."[3]

Megatrends fired an early volley in what became the school reform/restructuring movement. It was followed in 1983 by *A Nation at Risk*, which described a rising tide of mediocrity in U.S. schools, and in 1986 by *A Nation Prepared*, which outlined changes that needed to take place if American schools, American students, and American citizens were to remain competent and competitive in an increasingly global economy.

Despite such reports and recommendations, evidence continued to accumulate that a gap existed between what students actually knew and understood and what schools assumed they were learning.

In 1987, a national study called *What Do Our 17 Year Olds Know?* concluded that the younger generation was at risk, "ignorant of important things that it should know, gravely handicapped by that ignorance upon entering into adulthood, citizenship and parenthood."[4] Fifteen years later, on May 10, 2002, *USA Today* ran a front-page story on the 2001 U.S. History Report Card results, which found U.S. high school students ignorant of their nation's history and society. The headline read, "Kids Get Abysmal Grade in History. High School Seniors Don't Know Basics."

> Rather than lacking rigor, media literacy instruction necessitates critical inquiry, and my students (whether online or in my classroom) will tell you that media literacy absolutely requires print literacy. We read and read and then read some more.

Tools and Schools

The news this year has not been all negative, however. In *The Courage to Teach*, Parker Palmer observes that "everything depends on the lenses through which we view the world."[5] From one lens or point of view, our students are actually doing quite well.

Who are these young people? Some refer to them as "media savvy." To others, they are the new pioneers of "cyberia." Whatever we call them, a new report, *The Digital Disconnect*, puts it simply: "[U]sing the Internet is the norm for today's youth."[6]

Published by the Pew Internet and American Life Project, *The Digital Disconnect* reports that 78 percent of middle and high school students use the Internet. According to the researchers, students believe that "the Internet helps them navigate their way through school and spend more time learning in depth about what is most important to them personally."[7]

While the most experienced of these students look upon the Internet as "a virtual study group" and "an important way to collaborate on project work with classmates," they also report frustration with the limited ways their teachers use today's technology. From the students' point of view, too many of their teachers ignore the dynamic interactivity of the Internet as a teaching tool, opting to use it instead as some form of electronic textbook. The report also comments that some students view the Internet "as a mechanism to plagiarize material or otherwise cheat."[8]

While more young people have access to the Internet and other media than any generation in history, they do not necessarily possess the ethics, the intellectual skills, or the predisposition to critically analyze and evaluate their relationship with these technologies or the information they encounter. Good hand/eye coordination and the ability to multitask are not substitutes for critical thinking.

What Do Our 17 Year Olds Know? made a similar point. The study observed that "this generation has been weaned on television and movies...," adding that "it takes more than a textbook and lecture to awaken their interest and grab their attention."[9] It did not, however, assume that mere exposure to these media rendered such students thoughtful or reflective consumers.

In a series of significant questions, the researchers asked, "Can they make sense of what they see and hear? Do they have the perspective to separate what is important from what is trivial ...can they interpret the significance of the day's news?"[10]

Those same questions can today be formulated to address information encountered on the Internet. This new technology certainly promises much. Students who log on to www.newseum.org/todaysfrontpages, for example, will find 128 front pages from newspapers in 22 countries. On www.newslink.org they have at their disposal not only every major newspaper from across the United States, but also from around the world. What remarkable resources for social studies teachers!

On the downside, the Internet can give them access to sites that deny the Holocaust ever happened or claim that eating disorders are simply lifestyle preferences. Clearly, having access to information without the ability to analyze and evaluate that information is problematic at best, leaving us still "drowning in information and starved for knowledge."

Alan November, author of *Empowering Students with Technology*, knows there's a better approach. This approach harnesses the potential of the tools, uses students as knowledge producers, and ultimately changes roles and interactions in the teaching/learning process. Just as important, it provides young people with critical criteria for thinking about media messages.

Since the Internet has become the personal medium of young people, says November, "we are faced with the consequences of not teaching our children to decode the content. The growing persuasiveness of the Internet will lead to more and more students potentially being manipulated by the media."[11]

This view is consistent with that of the Carnegie Council of Adolescent Development, which supports "training in media literacy skills...in community and youth development programs...to imbue teenagers with critical habits of mind...to help them become effective users of technology, restoring personal control."[12]

> Failure to guide students toward media literacy incurs the very real risk of preparing them for a world that no longer exists.

Literacy in a Multimedia Age

The move toward computer literacy and information literacy has often obscured the connections to media literacy. In reality, teachers, librarians, school media specialists, and students need a common set of skills that will enable them to **access, analyze, and evaluate** information in any form. Teaching young people to think critically about the Internet is only part of the picture. Those skills need to be applied to all their sources of information, including newspapers, magazines, radio, television, advertising, and film. These media are all part of the communication culture we live in – a fact understood by most English teachers, who now recognize that the term *text*, once restricted to print media, today includes numerous nonprint formats.

The critical criteria young people can learn to apply to the media include an understanding of media language, genre, codes and conventions – whether the content is in picture books or PowerPoint. They learn to consider media audiences; media ideologies; and media representation, including depictions of race, class, gender, and disability.

It is apparent that the ability to read print is no longer sufficient when much of the information we receive, including on the Internet, consists of a fusion of sound, text, images, and video. Each of these elements has discrete characteristics and attributes, and cumulatively they contribute to a complex form of information that looks deceptively obvious in a world that is still too willing to assume that "seeing is believing."

Sometimes misunderstood as "dumbing down" the curriculum by teaching about popular culture, media literacy is in fact a life skill; a critical thinking skill that by definition requires the ability to both analyze and evaluate media messages. During 30 years of teaching, the most consistent phrase I have heard from my students – whether teenagers, young adults, or mature-aged students – is that media literacy instruction has been "an eye-opening experience." More to the point, it is also a mind-opening experience.

Rather than lacking rigor, media literacy instruction necessitates critical inquiry, and my students (whether online or in my classroom) will tell you that media literacy absolutely requires print literacy. We read and read and then read some more.

By doing so we begin to see that media literacy is an evolutionary, logical, and necessary response to the changing forms of communication in our society. Failure to guide students toward media literacy incurs the very real risk of preparing them for a world that no longer exists. Let us also be clear that developing media literacy does not require that we relinquish either the pleasure or the power of the printed word.

What media literacy does require is healthy skepticism – a questioning mind and the ability to look under every rock in an attempt to evaluate information in terms of its balance, bias, and accuracy. Understanding the pervasive and persuasive power of media messages also requires an awareness of the context and constraints in which media messages are created and consumed. In the case of broadcast news, for example, students would need to comprehend the constraints of a 30-minute block of time, as well as recognize how assumptions about the audience (identified as 40 years and older) might shape the way stories are selected, rejected, and presented.

While the current manifestation of media literacy is only now beginning to attract widespread attention in U.S. schools – showing up in state frameworks and standards from language arts to library science and health – it is much more entrenched in the classrooms and curricula of Canada, the United Kingdom, and my native Australia, where it has been taught for more than 25 years.

In the United Kingdom, the new millennium saw the publication of two major documents to integrate the study of media into the classroom, *Making Movies Matter*[13] and *Moving Images in the Classroom.*[14] The latter argued that "the moving image is a shared and

vital global language...critical understanding of film, video and television is becoming an integral part of literacy and the spread of digital technologies means that the ability to make and manipulate moving images will become an ever more important skill."

Media literacy is a logical, even necessary match for social studies standards that address global connections, individual development and identity, and individuals, groups, and institutions.

Curriculum Connections

In the past decade, media education has slowly begun to find its way into curriculum frameworks and standards throughout the United States. For the most part, media education has meant integrating the concepts and skills associated with media literacy into existing areas of the traditional curriculum. Though there is some evidence of media literacy being offered as an elective or stand-alone subject, the dominant pattern has been one of integration rather than isolation. The integrated, interdisciplinary approach is consistent with the one many library media organizations use in their approach to information literacy, and it is certainly consistent with the curriculum connectedness so valued by the National Middle School Association.

In California, the English Language Arts Standards include the following objectives:

- Compare and contrast points of view expressed in broadcast and print media.
- Identify, analyze, and critique persuasive techniques in media messages.
- Analyze media as sources of information, entertainment, persuasion, and transmission of culture.

On topics such as eating disorders, diet, nutrition, childhood obesity, sexuality, and substance abuse, young people are exposed to media messages that can support or contradict classroom instruction. Therefore, the National Health Education Standards state that students need to "analyze the influence of culture, media, technology and other factors on health."[15]

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services also acknowledges the role of media in shaping our attitudes and behavior in the area of human health. *Healthy People 2010*, in language reminiscent of definitions of media literacy, defines health literacy as the capacity "to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions."[16]

Having utilized this approach in curriculum development and training for groups such as Arkansans for Drug Free Youth, I believe that media literacy can be an effective tool, although not a panacea, to help young people detect and reject potentially deceptive marketing campaigns or media messages that glamorize risky lifestyles and promise consumption without consequences.

Perhaps nowhere is media literacy more logically located than within the social studies, with their emphasis on civics, citizenship, community, and the process of locating, gathering, analyzing, and interpreting information.

Media literacy is a logical, even necessary match for social studies standards that address global connections, individual development and identity, and individuals, groups, and institutions. Along with the family, schools, and churches, mass media must surely be considered major agents of socialization and therefore worthy of study.

Recognizing this connection, Wisconsin last year introduced media literacy into the state's social studies standards. "A major change in the way people get information has occurred in the last 40 years," the authors wrote. "Most citizens and students now get much of their information about their own country and the wider world from electronic media."[17]

The Wisconsin approach positions media literacy as a means of critical social inquiry to foster knowledge and understanding about individuals and institutions. It develops process skills that include the ability to analyze the authenticity and validity of sources and the ability to analyze sources for gender bias and stereotypes

Further validation of the link between media literacy and social studies was offered last year when the White House published *Helping Youth Navigate The Media Age*. A crucial statement emphasized that media literacy "may offer young people positive preparatory skills for responsible citizenship. For example, media literacy can empower youth to be positive contributors to society, to challenge cynicism and to serve as agents of social change."[18]

Any attempt to prepare young people for responsible citizenship must surely include consideration of the way

the media depict the political process, the work of our legislatures, the person and office of the presidency, and the political parties – including respect and equal time for minor parties. With more and more Americans identifying themselves as political independents, rather than as Democrats or Republicans, state and national media have an obligation and responsibility to recognize alternative voices in the political landscape.

The Alliance for a Media Literate America (AMLA) has embraced the concept of recognizing and respecting young people by validating their voices and their visions. At its conference in Austin, Texas, last year, the organization featured youth media makers who traveled across the country to record the event and to showcase their own productions. Instead of creating a conference focused narrowly on what media does *to* young people, AMLA also explores what young people do *with* the media.

As both creators and consumers of media, our young people have a unique relationship with the industry. Their disposable incomes make them lucrative targets, but there is a fine line between marketing and manipulation.

In this nation, giant communication conglomerates are afforded the privilege of First Amendment rights, but along with those rights they should assume responsibility for producing and distributing products and programs that do not exploit the young or other impressionable groups in our society.

Used ethically, the mass media can play an important role in preparing young people to be productive workers and informed, responsible citizens. Misused, the media can be a source of misinformation and manipulation from which our children need to be protected. They are also, one should never forget, a source of pleasure, escape, fantasy, and engagement that enriches our lives.

In the open marketplace of ideas represented by a democratic capitalist system, we witness a precarious balance of rights, roles, and responsibilities. As our world faces an uncertain future and our global connectedness plays itself out in the struggle to form international coalitions of concern, there is already a debate about the public's right to know and the government's need for security and secrecy. This focus on literacy and liberty is in fact the theme of the National Media Education Conference scheduled for June 2003.

If our democracy is to avoid entropy and decay, we as citizens and consumers must be conscientious about the role the media play in our lives. In short, to be literate in a multimedia era raises complex questions about our dependence upon, our independence from, and our interdependence with the media. How we formulate and answer those questions might well determine not only the safety and health of ourselves and our families, but also the health, vitality, and strength of our democracy and the body politic.

To be literate in a multimedia era raises complex questions about our dependence upon, our independence from, and our interdependence with the media.

Recommendations:

Is the media literacy glass half empty or half full? While it is true that media literacy is beginning to show up in state standards, that innovation should not be equated with classroom implementation or practice.

Beset with often competing and conflicting priorities, including time-consuming, high-stakes accountability testing, teachers often ask how they can attend to media literacy in addition to everything else they are doing. Until that question is meaningfully addressed by the modeling of effective and efficient classroom practice, media literacy may well remain what one British proponent described as "the province of the enthusiasts."

Below are suggestions for bringing media literacy to the forefront and supporting educators' efforts to fully integrate media education into the curriculum.

- **Link the Literacies**
  Articulate common processes and critical literacies involved in accessing, analyzing, interpreting, comprehending, and creating messages in a multimedia era. This strategy encourages an interdisciplinary focus on literacy, with common skills being reinforced across the curriculum.
- **Match Mission Statements**
  Demonstrate how media literacy is compatible with key goals of U.S. education, including the ability to develop productive workers and to create responsible citizens for a democratic society. Media literacy can be connected to the mission statements of various disciplines, such as the National Council of Teachers

of English and the National Council for the Social Studies. A developmentally appropriate model can also be used to connect media literacy to a middle school philosophy and mission.

- **Train Teachers**
  Pre-service and in-service workshops and training are necessary if teachers are to embrace media literacy in their subject areas. Identify management models used by institutions such as Appalachian State University that have integrated media literacy into teacher training. Work with CESAs (Cooperative Educational Service Agencies) and RESAs (Regional Educational Service Agencies) to develop local and state training in which media literacy is aligned with state standards and frameworks.

- **Provide Resources**
  One of the most consistent requests from teachers is for relevant resources they can use in their classrooms. Identify and disseminate relevant resources to support classroom teachers. Two excellent starting points are the Media Literacy Clearinghouse, www.med.sc.edu:1081/, and the one-stop shopping afforded by the Center for Media Literacy's recommended resources at www.gpn.unl.edu.

- **Encourage Evidence and Evaluation**
  Provide educators with means to document, through portfolio assessment and other tools, evidence of outcomes that demonstrate the impact of media literacy on the way students conceptualize information. One useful area to document is the ability of media literacy to engage reluctant readers and at-risk students, potentially stemming dropout rates.

- **Nurture Partnerships with the Media Industry**
  Canadian and Australian experiences demonstrate that media literacy can grow through mutually beneficial partnerships with the industry. The private/public partnership in Maryland, where the State Department of Education teamed with Discovery Communications to produce *Assignment Media Literacy*, is one example of what can be achieved.

- **Support Parent Partnerships**
  The National Middle School Association recognizes that schools are more successful when they team with families. Media literacy cannot simply be practiced in the classroom but should be reinforced in the living room, where parents and children engage in co-viewing. PTO/PTA groups are allies that can facilitate this process.

- **Engage, Don't Enrage**
  Finger-pointing exercises and the blame game do not serve the interests of media literacy. Thoughtful, reflective criticism and respectful dialogue are part of a healthy democracy in which consumers and communication conglomerates come to understand each other's nature and needs. One excellent model that brings teachers and journalists together is the Media and American Democracy Institute at the Shorenstein Center, www.teachingdemocracy.gse.harvard.edu/.

- **Spotlight High-Profile Supporters**
  Many educators and parents remain unaware of the significant support that developed for media literacy throughout the 1990s, from such figures as Richard Riley, then U.S. Secretary of Education. Media literacy has been endorsed by the Office of National Drug Control Policy, the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, and the National Middle School Association, among other prestigious groups. Document this support and use it to promote the media literacy movement.

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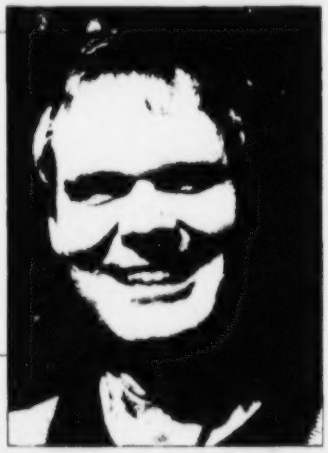
New Media and New Media Literacy

The horizon has become the landscape – new media are here



Currently a consultant with the Toronto District School Board, Neil Andersen has taught film and/or media studies at five high schools and worked to help teachers integrate technology into their curricula for four years. He has given numerous educational workshops in Canada, the United States, and Europe. He has made movies and videos and designed computer programs, websites, and CD-ROMs. Mr. Andersen has authored or co-authored 10 student texts and teacher resource books. His website, Media Launchpad, helps students and teachers study media on the Internet, and is now part of the Association for Media Literacy website (www.aml.ca). He received the Jesse McCanse Award in 2001 and the Magic Lantern Award in 2002, both for outstanding contributions to media education.

by Neil Andersen

In the one-room schoolhouse my father attended, information access involved schoolbooks and periodicals. Information processing involved reading, writing, speaking, listening, and drawing. The teacher controlled most of the information flow. Homework was done on paper using pencils or pens dipped into inkwells.

My father had to complete grade 11 by correspondence because his teacher had completed only grade 10. While his mother was keenly interested in and supportive of her children's education, she was not well educated and so deferred to the teacher's judgments.

Within three generations, the world has changed dramatically. My teaching colleagues hold several degrees, and in their classrooms, students can gather information from print, video, and the Internet. After school, many students are chatting with each other online and on cell phones. They're doing homework; visiting websites; trading pictures, music, and data files electronically; watching television; going to movies; and playing video games – often doing several of these things simultaneously. They have access to information and entertainment from almost anywhere at almost any time. The environments created by these technologies have redefined education so profoundly that teachers and parents must rethink their roles in children's learning.

Because many 21st-century homes are equipped with more-robust technology than most schools, there is often a significant disconnect between students' thinking and classroom demands. Students emerging from home electronic environments have experienced multimedia immersion, participating on many cognitive levels and in many media languages simultaneously. The dominant design of many classroom curricula, however, is to isolate a few senses and concentrate on them in depth, while ignoring others.

Reading print, for instance, is antithetical to processing electronic information in that it invokes one visual skill (the act of decoding and understanding icons that represent abstract sounds) while suppressing others (hearing, smell, and touch). Reading requires skills involving concentration, linearity, sequence, and abstraction that may be unnatural to children who are adept at attending to multiple messages and languages simultaneously. A print environment could be as challenging to these children as a rave environment, with its booming music, physical movement, strobing light, and large crowds, could be to their grandparents. Students often signal their discomfort with the single-medium classroom by wearing their headphones, whether they are listening to them or not. They attempt to import some of their preferred multimedia environment into the foreign territory of the classroom.

Just as they do their homework while listening to their favorite tunes, they try to mediate the single-focus, single-medium classroom task with their headphones.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the fact that media are ubiquitous and technologies are constantly changing, many people still struggle with the full implications of media literacy. "Media" include all environments that contain and communicate information: not only television, the Internet, and newspapers, but also shopping malls, summer camps, neighborhoods, and classrooms. Thinking critically about the behaviors and values communicated by these environments can help children be more successful in their evolving world. Media literacy – the ability to analyze and create messages, as well as analyze the media themselves – is THE most critical skill because it underpins all other learning. In the Information Age, information processing skills are the most important skills a person can learn.

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The Characteristics of New Media

Examining the characteristics of new technologies can help us understand their effects. Seeing them as new and very different environments might help us understand our own roles and reactions when operating within them.

The Dazzle Factor

While children undergo a form of culture shock in focused classroom activities, their parents and teachers may have similar feelings when experiencing new multimedia, and especially their content. New technologies almost always put sensibilities into a state of imbalance, often as a result of their bedazzling qualities. Humans can concentrate on one communication or many, but one is easier. Because we descend from hunters whose survival depended on seeing animals moving in a forest, we find movement especially compelling. Reading a book requires one level of concentration, while experiencing a website requires several: simultaneous sensitivities to words, images, sounds, color, and especially movement. The multiple messages, each demanding its own cognitive space, can overwhelm the mind and reduce its ability to make sense of what is presented.

Coupled with this imbalance may be an adult's concern for the new media's content, which is often challenging to social mores. Unfortunately, a preoccupation with content obscures the form, making it difficult for some people to perceive the true nature of the new media. Adults feel an understandable urge to shield children from what they consider inappropriate influences. Unless, these influences are clearly dangerous, however, withholding judgment may allow both children and adults to understand the media better. The speed of technological change is not likely to slacken, and it may hold us in a state of constant bedazzlement. Meeting its challenges will require us to avoid snap judgments while seeking more objective points of view.

Beyond Hardware and Software

"Technology" is not merely the cell phone and the game controller but, more profoundly, the thinking required to create and use them. In other words, technology resides in the mind – the gadgets are only the physical manifestations of technological thought. It is the mind's uses of and reactions to the technology that are important to consider. The mind is where attitudes, values, and practices develop and where social practices reside. Television may be an interesting appliance, but it is our reactions to the experience of viewing television, in the form of behaviors and attitudes, that define its social impact. The following questions might help us to understand how we use technologies to extend our actions and influence our relationships: How do we place technology in our homes? How do we arrange our lives around its schedules? How do we use it to build and maintain relationships with family and friends? How do we incorporate it into our political processes?

I wouldn't want to pay the long-distance telephone fees to speak to my friend in France, and buying correct postage for my New Zealand friend is just too much trouble, but emailing them is easy and fun. The Internet has extended my conversational reach in profound ways. Students can easily compare homework or angst by instant messaging, and the support and knowledge they gain may be significant. Conversely, the new media might also become vehicles for the age-old childhood

problems of peer pressure or bullying. For example, the apparent anonymity of the Internet may tempt a child to create a website that makes fun of a classmate. The Internet can be used as readily to spread rumors and false information as to bring people together for political action. In the new media environment, we should examine not only how we use technology to influence relationships and behavior but also how the technology changes the way we behave and relate to others.

> The speed of technological change is not likely to slacken, and it may hold us in a state of constant bedazzlement.

New Media, New Interactivity

Exploring our uses of technology provides one opportunity for increasing media literacy. Another opportunity may arise from exploring the degree of a technology's interactivity, which places it on an interesting continuum. Print is interactive in that readers can invest words with personal meanings. On the other hand, print is a one-way communication in that readers usually are forced to read in a linear sequence, following lines of text and considering each idea as the author presents it. Television, radio, and newspapers are similarly one-way communications, with sequence and pace largely determined by the creator of the message. Television and radio are also very ephemeral experiences, with new messages constantly pushing past messages into the background, making it hard to reflect on what has been experienced.

By contrast, many of the new technologies are relatively more interactive and user-controlled. The remote control allows television viewers some degree of editing control, in that they can pop from one channel to another at will, but they are still constrained by the scheduling and availability of programming. Video games, and especially the Internet, are much more user-controlled; users can move freely among their selections at their own pace. Thus, many new media users create their own media messages by controlling the sequence and duration of their experiences. This increased level of user control helps to explain why many new media appear to be more compelling than their predecessors, and it offers parents and teachers a clue on how to help children use thinking skills that let them make sense of the new media messages.

The multilayered, ephemeral, and fast-paced qualities that are the hallmarks of new media messages place great mental demands on users. We are required to make sense of more complex messages in less time. Parents and teachers can help students understand these messages by providing time and an open forum within which to examine the messages and the range of audience reactions. Such opportunities rarely arise naturally within a child's day, but scheduling some "timeout" to reflect in the classroom or home will support the growth of media literacy.

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Synchronicity

The evolution and effects of new media are especially influenced by synchronous trends. One involves miniaturization, portability, and speed. The second involves access. The third results from two different, but symbiotic, convergences.

The synchronicity of miniaturization, portability, and speed

Computers once as large as buildings have become the size of paperbacks. Combined with efficient batteries, this miniaturization results in portability that allows us to take them anywhere. Faster processors and storage devices complete sophisticated tasks in a blink, accelerating all attendant activities.

The synchronicity of access

Wireless connectivity offers us instant access to information, movies, songs, and news. We no longer need to wonder, but can obtain precise information from multiple sources at will.

Synchronicity and convergence

While one form of convergence combines computers, cameras, and cell phones, another, much more profound convergence occurred in the 1980s: digitization of information. The integrating and involving effects of this convergence are still unappreciated. When

information was recorded as a variety of dissimilar analog codes, integrating it was awkward: to be integrated into a TV broadcast, a graphic had to be created on paper, then photographed by an analog camera and edited into other images. Many TV messages were originally movies, which had to be projected into a video camera. Merging information was expensive, awkward, and sometimes impossible. When all information forms became digital, the numbers could be converted handily by applying mathematical formulas. Integrating a graphic into a TV broadcast became as easy as identifying its format (JPEG or TIFF), then inserting it into another collection of numbers (video). Consider how easy, fast – and consequently contentious – it is to rip CD music files.

The impact of these synchronous trends on learning is profound. Consider, for instance, how a school field trip might change when students, carrying a device about the size of a sandwich, can record sound and image while simultaneously accessing Internet libraries and laboratories. The sequence of primary experiences processed later with other secondary experiences is telescoped into simultaneous experience. When experiences and responses are no longer punctuated by time and written reflection but occur almost simultaneously, students must be able to organize their thoughts and process information on multiple channels in what has been called multitasking. Students can create a report that mixes sound, images, video, and text and immerses the receiver in information. They share it in the real classroom and with an expanded audience on the Internet. The information processing demands placed on students by their interactions with such technologies require new cognitive and metacognitive skills.

Citizenship and news reporting will be redefined when the kind of grassroots journalism and social response that resulted from videotaping Rodney King's assault is available to anyone carrying a video cell phone. To operate successfully in these new environments, students need a thorough understanding of how communications technologies influence thinking and behavior – media literacy. They also need time and guided reflection to develop that literacy. Just as space has been opened up in the curriculum for scientific awareness, time must be provided regularly to support media literacy.

Control

Controlling access to information proves a challenge in the Information Age. Censorship is really possible only in a closed system, in which one agency (e.g., adults) can control access to information (e.g., books in a library). In an open system such as ours, and with the plenitude of new information offered by the new media, attempts at censorship become futile. Television and the Internet offer children easy access to varied messages, and the hundreds of channels and millions of websites are impossible to monitor. Even totalitarian governments are no longer able to control the flow of information. So what is one to do?

The most effective way to help children understand and deal with messages of racism, sexism, or consumerism is not censorship but education. This is not to say that censorship should be abandoned, but that it is naive to think that it is sufficient.

Computer networking has "outed" neural networks of the mind, allowing us to process information and ideas collectively in that extension of our brain called the Internet. This open flow of information and ideas has shifted the onus of information management from the state to the individual. Media literacy is not a stylish hobby for an affluent few but an essential skill for all citizens. If students are to assume the responsibility for their own information access and processing, they must be provided the cognitive tools and opportunities to develop and refine those tools.

Consider, for instance, how a school field trip might change when students, carrying a device about the size of a sandwich, can record sound and image while simultaneously accessing Internet libraries and laboratories.

Helping Children Respond to Multimedia Environments

What can parents and teachers do to minimize their anxieties and maximize children's learning while using these new technologies? What new thinking and social skills are called for?

- **Build prior knowledge.**
  New information can make sense only within the context of existing information. More prior knowledge will improve this process. Encourage children to read, surf, view, visit casual educational facilities such as museums and science centers, and travel, even within their own locales. Encourage them also to access information via different media, such as newspapers, television, the Internet, and radio.
- **Observe before interpreting: delay judgments.**
  Making snap judgments can activate prejudices that prevent further analysis and deeper understanding. Avoid a rush to judgment by separating and examining your perceptions. Here are some useful questions: What do I see and hear? What is it similar to? What is my reaction? What about me might account for that reaction? What about the text might account for that reaction? How might other people react differently? Why?
- **Actively pursue information processing technologies and strategies.**
  Keep up to date on what new technologies are coming, how existing technologies are evolving, and how they can be used efficiently and appropriately. It is not necessary to acquire the technologies so much as to learn how to use them, so that you are ready when the opportunities come. Reading about new communications technologies, visiting trade shows or electronics stores, or even renting an appliance will support student learning.
- **Create a continuum of learning between home and school.**
  Discover what technologies and skills are being used at school, then support those uses at home. Alternatively, many homes have technologies that are not yet available, or commonly used, in the schools. Encourage students to use the school technology, but also to take advantage of home-based technologies.
- **Help students create a plan.**
  Recognize processes, languages, and forms. The mediated world is often seamless, even though different experiences might invoke different thinking skills. Recognizing that detailed, linear thinking is required when reading, while holistic perceptions work better when viewing, can help students process information more effectively. Knowing the differences between narrative and documentary structures will help them recognize and retain information. Take a few moments to examine the "big picture" that surrounds a particular project or technology, specifically labeling which language forms and thinking skills are appropriate to the activities. Once students understand which skills are required, they will be likelier to succeed in practicing them. One way to do this is to create a plan for how a project will be done, breaking down and labeling the processes and skills for each step. Creating a metacognitive level at the beginning will make it easier to access and build upon it as the experience proceeds.
- **Create reflective opportunities.**
  Students' lives are filled with experiences, but they do not always have time and strategies for reflecting on those experiences. "Intentional" students who are aware of their own learning processes, strengths, and weaknesses are more effective learners. Parents and teachers can help students pause to reflect on their new learnings and on their own learning processes. Such reflections might take the form of informal dialogue between student and parent or teacher. Or, they might take the form of written journal entries or debriefing discussions between groups of students who were all involved in a project.

  Ask students what they thought of a new media experience, how they felt, whether their first impressions were accurate, or whether they think it is an experience worth repeating or recommending. Ask them to describe memorable qualities. Be a learner, genuinely interested in understanding the experience from their point of view.
- **Consider both local and global implications.**
  Multimedia messages may be experienced individually, but they are shared by many. In addition to reflecting on their personal reactions, children might imagine how others might react to the messages, or how the messages need to be modified for other audiences. Such musings can help students to understand their relationship to communications and technologies.
- **Expand discussions of learning beyond the school experience.**
  Children learn at the playground, on family vacations, at the mall, and while doing household chores. Don't try to make everything an object

lesson, but do help them take a moment to see the skills and learnings that might have resulted from some everyday mediated experiences.

- **Remember to have fun.**
  There is pleasure in using media, just as there is pleasure in learning. Allow the pleasure to happen and celebrate it when it does. Everything we do in media literacy doesn't have to be hard, serious work.
- **Create whenever possible.**
  People in the Information Age have great opportunities to participate in information flow, and communications technologies are within reach of many. Children can attend workshops, studios, and production classes. They can document family events, trips, birthdays, weddings, or graduations and participate in family projects, creating videos, websites, newsletters, collages, or posters. It is unnecessary to buy all the technology. Families without production equipment might rent or borrow it or use community resources. Creative activities help students see themselves as producers as well as consumers of information, which is a crucial quality in the new media environment.

> Computer networking has "outed" neural networks of the mind, allowing us to process information and ideas collectively in that extension of our brain called the Internet.

Media Literacy Is Life Literacy

If we expect Information Age children to function effectively as workers and citizens while enjoying their lives, we have to provide them with the opportunities and supports to discover and develop their information processing skills. Media Literacy – the ability to understand, appreciate, and communicate within multimedia environments – must become part of all learning, at home and at school. It takes a village to raise a child, and in the Global Village, governments, businesses, parents, and teachers share the collective responsibility.

Want to Learn More About Media Literacy?

Are you interested in learning more about media literacy? Cable in the Classroom and the George Lucas Educational Foundation suggest the following resources. They provide excellent information for parents and educators, including activities and strategies for furthering media literacy at home and at school.

On the Web:

Alliance for a Media Literate America (www.amlainfo.org) is dedicated to stimulating growth in media literacy education in the United States by organizing and providing national leadership, advocacy, networking, and information exchange.

Assignment Media Literacy (www.marylandpublicschools.org/assignment_media_lit/home.html) is a comprehensive new curriculum resource designed to strengthen media literacy and communication skills and promote reading, writing and critical thinking skills for students in grades K-12, created by the Maryland Department of Education and Discovery Communications.

Center for Media Education (www.cme.org). From advocating for an expansion of children's educational television programming to analyzing Internet advertising and marketing to youth and teens, CME has been at the forefront of efforts to create a quality media culture for children and families.

Center for Media Literacy (www.medialit.org). Visit the website for an excellent selection of articles and reports related to media literacy or to subscribe to the organization's listserv or online newsletter.

Children Now (www.childrennow.org). This children's advocacy group monitors the impact of all media on children and teens through thoughtful analysis and annual opinion surveys of youth.

Educational Video Center (www.evc.org). This New York City–based organization teaches documentary video production and media analysis to youth, teachers, parents, and community organizers. The website features a variety of resources, including articles, curriculum guides, and more.

Global SchoolNet Foundation (www.gsn.org/cf/rubric/index.html). Among the many top-notch resources on this site is the CyberFair 2002 Peer Review, which includes a detailed rubric to guide students' evaluation of other student-created websites.

Growing With Media (www.pbs.org/parents/growingwithmedia/). This comprehensive media literacy site for parents provides a treasure trove of information on such critical issues as evaluating media credibility, resisting advertising and marketing, and encouraging youth and teens to become producers as well as consumers of media.

The Just Think Foundation (www.justthink.org). Just Think develops curricula and provides school-based, after-school, and community-based media literacy instruction. The website includes a parents' guide to television and a variety of curriculum resources.

Media Literacy Clearinghouse (www.med.sc.edu:1081/). This extensive website includes lesson ideas for teachers interested in exploring media literacy in their classrooms, as well as links to an array of topics, including motion pictures, questions to ask about media messages, visual literacy, news/journalism, gender/representation, and political advertising.

National Telemedia Council (www.nationaltelemediacouncil.org), founded in 1953, is the oldest professional media literacy organization in the US. NTC publishes *Telemedium: The Journal of Media Literacy*, sponsors workshops and conferences and presents the Jessie McCanse Award for individual long-time contribution to the field of media literacy.

New Mexico Media Literacy Project (www.nmmlp.org/). New Mexico Literacy Project is a nearly 20-year-old media education project focusing on health education and violence prevention. In addition to offering workshops for parents and educators, the project provides a wealth of curriculum resources on its website.

NoodleTools (www.noodletools.com). Besides boasting a wide variety of online research tools, this site features an excellent teacher resource called NoodleTeach, a guide to teaching "21st Century Literacies."

Prime Time Today (www.primett.org). Dedicated to helping parents, teachers, and media specialists engage children in the study of all kinds of media and the messages found therein, this website includes resources such as a media literacy coloring book (for 5-to 8-year-olds) and a board game for families to play after watching a TV sitcom.

Taking Charge of Your TV (www.ciconline.org/section.cfm/7/66). Taking Charge of Your TV is a partnership of the National Parent Teacher Association, Cable in the Classroom, and the National Cable & Telecommunications Association that encourages and facilitates local partnerships between PTA and cable leaders to teach families about the key concepts of media literacy. Visit this site for a primer on media literacy, a downloadable workbook, and information about educational media.

UCLA Center for Communication Policy (http://ccp.ucla.edu). Resources available on the center's website include the results of its Television Violence Monitoring Project, a three-year study analyzing programming on the major networks from 1994 to 1997.

Web Smart Kids (www.websmartkids.org). Dubbed "A Parent's Guide to Building Children's Media Literacy Skills for the Internet," this site includes an overview of media literacy, resources, and suggested activities to help parents and children become more media literate.

Books and Other Resources:

The Digital Disconnect: The Widening Gap between Internet-savvy Students and Their Schools, by the Pew Internet and American Life Project, reveals kids' views of how the Internet could be a more positive element in teaching and learning, at home and at school. Available at www.pewinternet.org.

From Library Skills to Information Literacy: A Handbook for the 21st Century, 2nd edition, published by the California School Library Association and Hi Willow Research & Publishing, offers models, processes, explanations, and strategies for integrating information literacy into teaching and learning. Available at www.lmcsource.com/.

Handbook of Children and the Media, by Dorothy and Jerome Singer, includes works from researchers, industry, and government representatives and provides an analysis of both traditional and new media. Available at www.sagepub.com/.

Illuminating Texts: How to Teach Students to Read the World, by Jim Burke, includes information and activities for teachers to help students analyze and use a variety of "texts," including the Internet, literature, images, textbooks, and tests. Available at www.Heinemann.com.

Literacy in a Digital World: Teaching and Learning in the Age of Information, by K. Tyner, explores expanding literacy, the conflicting purposes of literacy, an arts-based approach to media education, teaching in the diverse classroom, and exemplary media education standards in the United States. Available at www.erlbaum.com.

Media Alert! 200 Activities to Create Media-Savvy Kids, by Sue Lockwood Summers, provides media literacy activities that parents and teachers can explore with children of all ages. Available at www.MediaAlert.org.

Media and You, by K.Tyner and D. Lloyd-Kolkin, provides teachers with a series of "reading readiness" exercises to help students look critically at the media around them. This package includes an activity guide for the elementary level, lesson plans, worksheets, parent and teacher resources, and tips on critical viewing. Available at bookstoread.com.

The Other Parent: The Inside Story of the Media's Effect on Our Children, by James P. Steyer, examines how all types of media affect today's youth and offers practical guidelines for parents and others interested in lessening the negative impact of media on children and teens. Available at www.simonsays.com.

The Smart Parent's Guide to Kids' TV, by Milton Chen, explores the negative effects and positive uses of television and provides practical advice on ways parents and children can use television for learning. Available from KQED Books, (415) 864-2000.

Web Wisdom: How to Evaluate and Create Information Quality on the Web, by Janet E. Alexander and Marsha Ann Tate, discusses how parents and teachers can apply criteria of authority, accuracy, objectivity, currency, and coverage to the evaluation of websites. Available at www.erlbaum.com.

October 15, 2002
Conversation Participants

Name	Organization/Affiliation
Jason Adsit	American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
Gene Broderson	Corporation for Public Broadcasting
David Considine	Appalachian State University
Elizabeth Crosby	Maryland PTA
Stephanie Flores-Koulish	Loyola College (MD)
Bonnie Frazier	Communities in Schools
Kathleen Fulton	National Commission on Teaching & America's Future
Melissa Ganley	National PTA
Shirley Igo	National PTA
David Kleeman	American Center for Children and Media
Peggy Koplitz	Alexandria (VA) Public School System
Douglas Levin	American Institutes for Research
Theresa Lewallen	Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development
Dick Lipsky	Montgomery County (MD) Public Schools
Greg Malling	Walt Whitman High School (Bethesda, MD)
Kalonji Martin	AOL@School
Peggy O'Brien	Cable in the Classroom
Ronne Ostby	Academy for Educational Development
Al Race	Cable in the Classroom Magazine
Robert Sachs	National Cable & Telecommunications Association
Kathy Swann	National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
Henri Thompson	Benton Foundation
Kristan Van Hook	Info Tech Strategies
Ann Walker	National Association of Elementary School Principals
Sharon Weigh	Maryland PTA
David Weinstein	National Endowment for the Humanities
Lynn Widdowson	Maryland State Department of Education
Katherine Woodward	National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
Kathleen Zeifang	Cafritz Foundation

October 15, 2002
Conversation Transcript

O'BRIEN: Welcome to this three-dimensional – "3D" – discussion on media literacy. I'm Peggy O'Brien, the executive director of Cable in the Classroom, the cable industry's education foundation. Since our founding in 1989, we have been making meaningful contributions to education. This is the second in our series of white papers, which discuss complex issues in education. Our first white paper addressed the role of technology in learning.

Today we turn to the topic of our second white paper: media literacy. It is exciting to bring together so many people, from so many different backgrounds, to discuss this important matter. Some of you think about media literacy all the time, but most of you are mainly focused on other education issues. We timed the launch of this paper and this gathering in observance of Taking Charge of Your TV Week, a media literacy effort sponsored by the cable television industry and National PTA.

I would like to introduce Robert Sachs, president and CEO of the National Cable and Telecommunications Association, the parent association of Cable in the Classroom. Leading an industry with a clear and continuing commitment to education, he believes deeply in the importance of education and Cable in the Classroom. He is the driving force behind Cable in the Classroom's new work. We are pleased that he is able to be with us today. Robert?

SACHS: Thank you, Peggy. I would like to welcome all of you today. I am delighted to be here for two reasons. First, in a minute I'll have the opportunity to introduce you to Shirley Igo, president of National PTA, a partner of ours in the Taking Charge of Your TV media literacy initiative.

Second, this forum gives me a chance to reaffirm the cable industry's commitment to media literacy. We strive to provide our customers the best possible programming and services, and we take pride in the tremendous diversity of cable TV programming. With such a wide array of programming, however, also comes the responsibility of helping families teach children to understand what they are watching. We need to help children become smarter, more critical, television viewers. That's why eight years ago we joined forces with Cable in the Classroom and National PTA to create Taking Charge of Your TV Week.

This initiative has two purposes: to highlight the importance of media literacy, and to give parents and educators useful resources for understanding and teaching critical viewing skills. Today's roundtable discussion is the centerpiece of this year's Taking Charge of Your TV Week.

Before we begin the discussion, however, let me introduce Shirley Igo. During our eight-year partnership with National PTA, we have been able to reach numerous teachers, families, and children, stressing the importance of media literacy. The PTA has played a pivotal role in this effort's success, and there has been no better or more committed advocate than the PTA's current president, Shirley Igo. Shirley has extensive experience on National PTA's board of directors, having served as president-elect for two years and before that as vice president for legislation. A native of Texas, she has also served as president of the Texas PTA and completed 10 years of service on that board. Ladies and gentleman, please welcome Shirley Igo.

[Applause]

IGO: The partnership that we have enjoyed with Cable in the Classroom and the National Cable and Telecommunications Association has been one of those rare partnerships that continues to get better. Having participated in those critical viewing-TV training sessions, I can tell you that they always raise awareness,

create enthusiasm, and, most important, give parents an additional way to be involved with their children. So, on behalf of the National PTA, I would like to express my appreciation for the partnership.

I think most of us enjoy television. It offers entertainment, news, and education. Some of the best times with my grandchildren involve watching TV programs at sleepovers or on a Saturday morning. I help them choose the programs, always asking myself whether the little ones understand what they are watching and whether the teenagers are really as involved in the programs as they seem. Many good, engaged parents ask these types of questions.

National PTA, the cable industry, and those of us gathered around this table today have a real opportunity to help families make informed decisions about the television programs that they are watching. The key here is media literacy. If we teach children to make television viewing a conscious choice, then we are succeeding. And National PTA truly believes it is a responsibility of parents and grandparents and teachers – of all adults – to be involved as children explore the vast world of television, a marvelous medium that can inspire children to do very positive things.

Media literacy has been a focus for National PTA since the early 1900s, not long after the organization was founded. At an annual convention in 1910, National PTA members recommended that moving pictures and vaudeville acts be supervised by local mothers clubs to protect children and youth. National PTA supported the Federal Communications Act of 1933, the Children's Television Act of 1990, and the Telecommunications Act of 1996, particularly its V-chip provisions. And we continue to examine what the FCC, industry, and parents are concerned about in the media.

Today, PTAs are hosting media literacy workshops and including information in newsletters and on their state PTA websites. They're creating resources for parents and for teachers to teach children media literacy. For the past eight years, in our collaboration with Cable in the Classroom and the National Cable and Telecommunications Association on Taking Charge of Your TV Week, National PTA has helped parents and families understand and make informed decisions about TV programs. Now more than 3,000 PTA and cable leaders have been trained, we've given workshops in 42 states, and we continue to reach many parents who want to know how to truly be involved in this critical piece of their children's lives – media.

We can talk about the positive effects of the media, but we need to be careful not to minimize the negative impact that the media can have on children and families. It's important to talk to children about what they're seeing and teach them how to watch and understand television and the Internet and other media. Watching a sitcom, a Saturday morning cartoon, or a weekend movie should be enjoyable for the whole family, but our children truly deserve the family dialogue and the skills to help them watch TV actively, carefully, creatively, and critically. Thank you.

[Applause]

O'BRIEN: Thank you so much. That starts us off on some very firm ground. Let me do just a little housekeeping about this conversation. First, you all have copies of the white paper. This conversation is being recorded and transcribed, and when we publish the final paper, this conversation will be a piece of it. Second, I may limit people's talking time, just so we will have a chance to hear from all voices at the table.

To get us started, let me introduce David Considine, one of this paper's authors. He is also the author of *Visual Messages: Integrating Imagery into Instruction*. He coordinates the only graduate program in media literacy in the country – at Appalachian State University – and is chairing the National Media Education Conference in Baltimore in 2003. He's been a media literacy consultant to the Clinton administration and the Bush administration, and he comes to this discussion as the best kind of expert – one who is interested in listening and learning in addition to speaking. We are very fortunate to have him with us. So, David Considine, I'm going to pitch you the first question: How would you define media literacy, and why is it important?

CONSIDINE: I'll go to what is regarded as the North American definition – a widely agreed-upon definition from Canada and the United States. Media literacy is an information skill. It's a competency, and that competency normally means the ability to access

information. Can students and other citizens use today's tools, technologies, and information systems to locate information? However, media literacy includes not only success in accessing information but success in processing information – thinking critically about it. Media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, and evaluate. So they have to be able to analyze it and break it down into component parts, evaluate it – compare and contrast, judge. And finally, just as traditional literacy involves both reading and writing – communicating successfully in print – in a multimedia age, when Americans get most of their information from media other than print, students and other citizens need the ability to effectively communicate using emerging information technologies as well. If you've ever been to a website that was hard to navigate, where the font was so small you couldn't read it, or where the background, which obviously looked wonderful at some point, was marbleized and made the text illegible, that's an indication of a person who had the technical skills to put the information online but lacked the design skills to understand what facilitates processing of that information. So that would be the starting point.

O'BRIEN: Comments? Thank you. Comments?

FULTON: Hi. I'm Kathleen Fulton. I would just like to get your assessment of why Canada has taken media literacy seriously and this country is so far behind.

CONSIDINE: It's an excellent question. I spent many years in the 1980s wandering through the United States, knocking on doors, saying things like "But in Great Britain, we've been doing . . ." or "But in Australia, we've been doing . . ." and people are like, who cares? And then, all of a sudden, the Canadians introduced media literacy into their curriculum in the 1980s and facilitated a couple of fabulous conferences at Wealth University. In this situation, Americans did what they do not often do: They went to another nation and learned from that nation. And that has been enormously influential in what has happened in the United States in the past 10 years.

I think one of the problems in the United States is that we can't see the forest for the trees. You have a situation where the most mass-mediated nation on earth has the worst Western standard of education in terms of preparing young people to critically understand, utilize, and apply that. It is not an accident that Great Britain, Canada, and Australia have been working at media literacy for 25 years.

I left Australia because of the impact of American mass media on my Australian students. I was watching it affect them. The same is true in Canada. In Saskatoon, Saskatchewan – areas where they are living in one country but saturated with another country's media – they become very aware of that and the impact that it has on their national identity. And of course, in Canada as well, you've also had the international model. Media literacy never started in Canada or Australia or the U.K. because of a ministry's conviction. It was always a grassroots teacher movement. Most of those nations have much greater respect for teacher autonomy. Part of that is tied into teacher unions. Teachers have had greater freedom to innovate curricula in those countries for decades.

O'BRIEN: Thank you. Doug Levin, would you mind if I put you on the spot for a minute just because you and I were talking a little bit earlier about the kind of bifurcation in terms of media literacy, in terms of media and technology. Would you say a couple of sentences about that?

LEVIN: Sure. I was struck in reading through the papers and thinking about media literacy about the stovepipes that we live in in this country and I'm sure elsewhere as well. In thinking about media literacy, I notice there are many parallels to conversations about technology literacy. Within the last 8 to 10 years, there's been a tremendous investment in putting computers and Internet connections in schools and with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act, there is a

legislative mandate that by the end of the eighth grade all students will be technologically literate. There are lots of conversations about what exactly that means – if those are keyboarding skills or something larger. And so I wonder, David, what you think about the similarities or differences that you see in those conversations, if you've been privy to them?

O'BRIEN: I'm not going to let you answer that.

CONSIDINE: Good. Great. And I know why.

O'BRIEN: David's not going to answer because we want this conversation to be multi-directional, not just between David and everyone else. Who has a comment about that? Do you find the same thing? Yes, Lynn?

WIDDOWSON: Hi, I'm Lynn Widdowson from the Maryland State Department of Education. I really do like that comment because I think the No Child Left Behind Act is going to help us with media literacy, although that was not its original intention. I think it was thought of as involving the skills pretty much as you said – keyboarding, figuring out how to turn it on, how to get information – but I don't think folks yet have a complete understanding of how that really does tie into media literacy. And I think that's one of the areas that we need to take advantage of. Now that we have No Child Left Behind and we have that technology component, it's important. Greg and I were speaking earlier of the fact that a media literacy class within his school is not part of a technology credit, yet it involves more technology than the technology class does. So, it's an area that we have to work on, and I think we can take advantage of that by using that and linking it to media literacy. I know in the Maryland media literacy curriculum, a couple of lessons have the kids working on some key components and then looking up Internet sites, and then helping to determine if something is a critical site. Is it a good site? Where is the information coming from? And who says what's a good site?

O'BRIEN: Any other comments on that? That's striking that a media literacy class isn't included in a technology requirement. David Kleeman?

KLEEMAN: I'm David Kleeman of the American Center for Children and Media, in Chicago. David, you referred to the fact that we are the most mediated nation, and I think, tying together these two comments, there is something of an assumption at times that fluency with media equates to thoughtfulness about media, that all the things kids are able to do with television and the Internet mean they are thoughtful about them. I think that's something that we need to overcome. The other thing that I find very interesting when you're talking about the other countries – their feeling of American culture dominating their own media – is that I think we need to rethink in this country whether American culture dominates American children's media, or whether in fact we've come to a point of global culture, where by making programs that can be sold worldwide and travel across borders, we're not really introducing children to their own culture in the United States. And that's another opportunity for media literacy, for kids to think about what it means to be an American when they turn on the television or when they turn on the Internet. How is it connecting them to their community, to their city, to their nation, to their world?

O'BRIEN: Thoughts on that? Yes, Shirley?

IGO: Slightly different but I think connected is the fact that parents can be the best advocates for media literacy in the schools, but only if they understand the concept of media literacy themselves.

That's the arena in which the PTA partnership truly needs to be enhanced and explored. I understand the reluctance of schools to embrace something, but once again, parents have the ability to influence the principal, to talk to the superintendent, to have conversations with school boards who make those decisions about our classrooms. And so I think it's important to remember that parents need to understand how important it is for their children to be able to make those media decisions so that parents can affect the policies that will in turn affect media literacy in our schools.

O'BRIEN: Other thoughts about parents? I mean, parents really do seem to be a key to this. There are certainly ways in which pockets of energy like this one are getting to parents. Are there other ways to get to parents? There are parents who clearly don't know anything about media literacy. Thoughts about that, from where you all sit? Kathleen Zeifang?

ZEIFANG: I want to circle back to one of the first things mentioned about media literacy. The point of it being access to information and learning how to access information does seem to be the technological component. To analyze that information and evaluate that information are elements that you would hope would also be taught to students in the classrooms in every subject area and at home by the parents. So I'm wondering, do educators in this room perceive this analysis and evaluation as strong elements within a general curriculum?

O'BRIEN: Great question. Possible answers? Lynn?

WIDDOWSON: The idea of analyzing being a skill within the curriculum is very prevalent in Maryland. That's been part of the testing process; in fact, the whole concept of the testing was not to be a multiple choice, direct answer kind of test but to be more involved with analyzing, evaluating, critically thinking.

And to tie in the comment about the parents, one of the things that I found very exciting about the curriculum that Dr. Renee Hobbs helped create with the Discovery Channel for Maryland was the fact that all the lessons do have a parent component. One of the things that I felt very strongly about when I got involved with the project was the letter that was part of the curriculum. It said, "Dear Parent," but we asked that this be changed to "Dear Family," because many of our young people do not live with their parents. They might be living with grandparents, they may be in a group home situation, but they're all somewhere within a family, so I think that is important. And I agree that we must get the parents involved, but I also agree that if they don't understand the concept and they don't know what it is, they're not going to be able to get involved.

It's the same thing with the drug issue. We have a lot of parents who don't know about what drugs their kids are using, because they don't understand anything about that information. So we must educate, and one of the things that I see as important is in every kind of venue, whether it's a PTA meeting or an after-school kind of group, wherever we're going to educate, we need to include parents. I like our Maryland curriculum because we're doing that.

O'BRIEN: Thank you. Other answers to Kathleen's question about what do you see from where you sit in terms of analysis and evaluation and so forth? Kathy Swann.

SWANN: Hi, Kathy Swann from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. I wanted to speak a little bit about the teacher role, and it comes back to this idea of technology literacy versus media literacy. Too often the concept of technology literacy is becoming the focus, rather than media literacy, especially in the current trends that I'm seeing to focus classroom work on using technology as a tool. And when you think of technology as a tool, when teachers approach it that way, they limit it to access, and they don't get to the analysis and the evaluation. So that's what came through so clearly for me in the paper, was that it's much more than just an access issue. Media literacy you could do with one computer in your classroom or with zero computers in your classroom. It's not really about that, but I think in public education, media literacy is not looked at as a skill across all curriculum areas; it's linked too closely to technology and access issues.

O'BRIEN: Kate, did you have a comment also?

WOODWARD: In terms of what Kathy said and the comments that we've heard about the difference between technology and media literacy (by the way, I'm Kate Woodward, from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards as well), I would say that I think it's really important that we start defining these kinds of things for the sake not only of parents but also of teachers and students and that, in a sense, the coming of computers has really brought media literacy more into the forefront. But I also think, as Kathy was saying, there's a difference between technology as tool, and teaching about technology, and whether technology is text – and all of those kinds of definitions.

And I also think there's another confusion in the terminology – the terms "viewing and visually representing" or "viewing and producing," which sort of parallel the other modes of communication of reading, writing, speaking, listening. I think there's a lot of confusion about what media literacy is and what viewing and visually representing mean. And I think it would be helpful if the community could define those terms in ways that embrace each other, so that viewing and visually representing have to do with media literacy or media literacy is a form of communication.

O'BRIEN: Clarity around definition. Comments on that? Kathleen?

FULTON: I hadn't thought about it this way, but I'm wondering if typically in English curriculum that's where you do your analysis. I mean, what we're really talking about is content. Doesn't matter if it's in a video game, if it's on an Internet site, if it's on television, the expansion of media in many forms still requires that we understand the content. So I'm just wondering how much this is part of the curriculum in the English/language arts areas, which it seems to me is the one place where people do think about analysis of content and the messages and that type of thing.

O'BRIEN: Greg?

MALLING: I'm Greg Malling. I teach English at Walt Whitman High School in Bethesda. I'm the one that can't get a technology education other than for media literacy.

O'BRIEN: Currently?

MALLING: Currently. Right. In Montgomery County, in the senior curriculum, there is a strong component of this in the second semester, where we analyze movies and television and that type of thing. I think the problem is partly that teachers are very uncomfortable with it. In fact, three or four years ago, at a county meeting of senior English teachers, not one person had done that unit. There are three units in that semester, and it's a short semester for seniors, so if anything's going to get cut, it's that. But it exists. Whether or not it's being used is another question. In the last four years,

at least at Whitman, we've managed to incorporate that study early on because, again, now we're asking, Is senior year, last semester soon enough?

O'BRIEN: You can talk, David Considine!

CONSIDINE: I'd like to go back to both Kathleen and Greg. National Council for Teachers of English has done a good job, and I've seen the document that's currently being revised that addresses the media literacy strains and components. One of the interesting things in the new document, I think, is that it's becoming more sophisticated so it goes beyond an analysis of text to an analysis of context, which is to say understanding the constraints in which media are produced and consumed. For example, there is discussion of 30-minute news broadcasts – what can and can't fit into those 30 minutes and the function of audience analysis in terms of controlling that.

But I think we have to look at the logical connections that still have not been made. My greatest concern at the moment is with the National Council for Social Studies. Social studies teaching has at its heart the preparation of a responsible citizens for participation in a democracy. Theodore White said back in 1982 in *America in Search of Itself* that the history of politics and the history of television are now so intertwined that you can't tell the story of one without telling the story of the other. If you look at the social studies trends, they talk about global connections, they talk about institutions and identity, they talk about community and institutions. To me, they scream media literacy, and yet the words "media," "television," "computing," "technology" are notable for their absence. So while many media literacy advocates see the bridges, those bridges have not yet been built, and we have a lot of work to do in those sorts of professional partnerships to make those connections visible and then afterward adopt them into standards, because Greg's saying, "What happens there?" Merely innovating the standards in the documents, that's the beginning, not the end. What we've got to do is implement them in the classroom, and that means listening to teachers in terms of the barriers and facilitators that help them to do that or prevent them from doing that.

O'BRIEN: Thank you. Let's talk about teachers, because I think that's where you're all headed. Let me just throw out a question and see what you have to say about this. In reading this paper, which I have now done a few times, and also reading the *Digital Disconnect* report from the Pew Internet and American Life project (actually, Doug Levin is the man who wrote that report), I am struck by what the *Digital Disconnect* report focuses on, the widening gap between students who are very Internet savvy and the administrators and the teachers at their schools who are not. And my question is, Can that be extended to all media? The notion that student-savvyness far out-weighs the savvyness of adults? It feels like it probably does. So I want to read you a quote from a middle school girl – from the *Digital Disconnect* report: "The Internet made looking for those poems a whole lot easier than having to go up to some strange librarian who was enjoying her Diet Coke and would do just about anything to get these people out of her library to go on her break. The Internet is like having a virtual librarian minus the attitude."

My question is, are we looking down the wrong end of the telescope? What many of you are saying is, for example, the success in Canada – and in Europe as well – is because it's a grassroots movement coming right from the teacher, right from the classroom. Greg, you're talking about how teachers aren't teaching it. I would love to know the ages of the teachers who aren't teaching media literacy in Montgomery County. So, if students are often much more familiar with media and technology than the people who are teaching them – is there a spot for students in the solution somewhere? Or what do we do with that if we're bemoaning the fact that teachers don't seem to be engaged in it? Even though the National Council of Teachers of English has it in its standards, that doesn't necessarily mean that people are teaching it, as we know. What does that feel like to anybody? Yes?

WEIGH: Good morning, thank you. My name is Sharon Weigh, and I'm with Maryland PTA. I guess my first question is, Have the kids been asked to the table?

O'BRIEN: Are you talking about this table?

WEIGH: Any table.

O'BRIEN: Any table. Have they? Who can talk about that? Al Race?

RACE: Al Race. I can say that at last year's National Media Education Conference there was a significant component of student media production that took place throughout the conference and then was presented at the end of the conference. It was far and away the most innovative and well-embraced conference component. In the next Media Education Conference that David is chairing, that component is going to be even more significant. And I think the important part of that is asking the students what they think, inviting them to the table, getting their participation in that way. I do think any teacher who is doing media education well is involving the students, is asking them what they think, and is getting them to participate in producing media as well as analyzing it.

O'BRIEN: Thank you. Other comments on that, on teachers? Gene?

BRODERSON: Gene Broderson, Corporation for Public Broadcasting. I think one of the things that's interesting that you just mentioned, Al, was that I think we're teaching kids for the most part how to analyze media and not necessarily the skills to apply the new knowledge and somehow change media. I think if you look at some of the TV production programs that are in schools, kids are rewarded for doing the same sorts of things that advertisers do in commercials. So, in some ways we're kind of reinforcing these behaviors and in essence kids are creating the same sorts of media as we're trying to look at with them and trying to educate them on. Greg might be able to speak a little bit more to that – if they have a program like that in Montgomery County.

O'BRIEN: Greg, we're making you speak for all teachers in the human race.

MALLING: Sure. Well, I agree. One story that pops to mind is we have a television news broadcast that goes out every other week. It's a 20-minute type of show, and last year we had one that was incredibly empty, shallow, no real news but we had a great technical guy who's now at NYU and he jazzed that up like you wouldn't believe. What I found interesting is the students still hated it **[Laughter]** and said there was nothing there, but when I went to lunch the teachers loved it. They thought it was one of the best shows they'd seen. What it brings to mind to me is something you had mentioned before – the students sometimes are more media-savvy than the teachers, I think perhaps because of their immersion in it.

O'BRIEN: Well, students tend not to use words like "media" and "technology" because they live them. People in my age group use words like "media" and "technology."

MALLING: Sure.

IGO: Can I ask a question?

O'BRIEN: Please.

IGO: I would like some thoughts. We talked about professional development. I would think pre- and continuing, both. I'd like some thoughts from this group about what they would consider appropriate professional development for teachers in the arena of media literacy.

O'BRIEN: Doug?

LEVIN: I'm actually not going to answer that question. I'm going to make it a little more difficult first, and let me tell you why. I think that I'm convinced, in having spoken to a lot of students around the country about how they are using the Internet for learning, that adults – whether they're parents or teachers or both – are always going to have a hard time understanding and keeping up.

And at one level, the conversation is about evaluating information and understanding content and context, and that is a more general skill that I hope is being taught in our schools. But one of the things that is different about some of these newer technologies – the Internet, handheld devices, mobile phones, and PDAs that allow students to beam information back and forth to each other – one of the things that is fundamentally different about these new technologies is that they're interactive. And they're really allowing students to communicate with one another and with others whom they don't know in ways they couldn't do before. Teachers and parents are no longer the sole sources of information for kids. It's much harder for them to control what kids see, how they see it, when they see it, and how they interpret what they see.

I don't see that getting any better, and I think that we talked about a role for students, for kids, at the table and I think that we found many of them to be very savvy and discerning, even downright disagreeable about uses of technology in school that didn't seem to have much purpose for them – that they were just about tools. We saw many, though, who are really confused, I think, and who weren't very savvy about how they used it and what they were seeing and they believed everything that they read. It's very troubling. So I think that needing to bring students to the table and really trying to stay on top of how they're using technologies and what they're doing with them is something that just needs to be done. And so, to get to your question on professional development, I think that it's going to be difficult, particularly as students are older, getting into high school and certainly in postsecondary education, to think that there is some training that will allow us to control or to better guide students uniformly well.

O'BRIEN: Thank you. Other thoughts about teachers? Ann?

WALKER: As we talk about professional development for teachers, I become concerned that we don't talk about professional development for principals. I'm Ann Walker from the National Association of Elementary School Principals, so it's not surprising that I bring this issue to the discussion, particularly at the elementary level, where media literacy has to begin. High school is wonderful, but it can't start there. It's like character education at the last minute. So, we have to look at elementary principals and their changing role as instructional leaders. More and more, they are the people in the school who know from classroom to classroom through observation whether the kind of media literacy development that we are talking about here actually takes place. And they are the ribbon that can hold that all together, given their role, so I would certainly suggest in response to Shirley's question that principals be high on the list of folks who get professional development,that their understanding of all the things we've talked about here is just as fundamental to what will happen in the classroom.

O'BRIEN: Kolanji? You're coming in loud and clear.

MARTIN: All right. Kolanji Martin with AOL@School. We've really been talking about bringing all the stakeholders together on the front end for developing the content. I think what's also critical, without getting into the details of what that content is, is making sure all those stakeholders are on the back end as far as the professional development being offered. So if it's an after-school professional development session, most definitely there are some topics that are processes and things that need to be just the staff, but for something like this, for that 2:30 to 4:00 session – 2:30 to 3:30 session – the parents and the students should be there as well. Have everybody at the table, everybody benefiting from the conversation, and it's not then just a group of teachers taking that session back to their principal and then back to the parents and students, but everybody's there for that session. I would think this topic would attract a lot of people.

Maybe another step in using technology would be a great school website with some of this content. So if I as a parent don't get home until 9 PM and there's no way I can make the session, I have an opportunity to get online and go to that information. And it would not be just "build it and they will come"; the school would need to promote it many different ways, through the PTA, through different media going home, that this is available, this is something crucial for you as a parent to share with your student.

O'BRIEN: That's great. Yes, Jason?

ADSIT: Hi, I'm Jason Adsit from the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, and, getting back to the issue of professional development, teachers have many demands on their time, and they have many demands on their time when it comes to professional development. A number of groups are demanding that specific professional development modules be set aside for teachers – character education, technology education, and now media literacy.

I think a creative way of going about incorporating this into already standing professional development programs and preservice teacher education is to figure out some ways to get media literacy into the other programs that are already there – the critical thinking skills that are part of the curriculum now for preservice teachers and for professional development. If this is something separate, teachers aren't going to want to do it. They're going to say, "I have 15 other professional development options, and I only have four or five days out of the year that I can do them."

O'BRIEN: Jason, can I ask you a follow-up question? Do you have a way that you could suggest that might happen?

ADSIT: I think that there are a number of very good technology-based or technology professional development programs where they have incorporated this into larger programs for teachers – and I can get the list for everyone – both at the preservice level and at the in-service level. They've had to sort of sneak it in the back way, because in much the same way you have media illiteracy, you had technology illiteracy among teachers – several generations of teachers who hadn't used it and either didn't feel it was important or were afraid to use it. And I think this will meet with a similar response, as evidenced by what the teachers are saying and what other teachers have said to me. You have to, at least early on, sneak it in a bit and start incorporating the critical thinking skills that accompany this. And that's ultimately what we're talking about here – the same sorts of critical thinking skills that you use when you're reading text carefully. I think those are already there, and the building blocks are in place to get those in.

CONSIDINE: Can I touch on that?

O'BRIEN: Yes, please.

CONSIDINE: I absolutely agree. I think you need an integrated, interdisciplinary model, as distinct from an isolated, stand-alone model. It's an area that Appalachian State went to in teacher preparation many years ago when we developed a course called Literacy Technology and Instruction, which is team taught. It's required of all of our undergraduates in teacher preparation, and it fused the reading department with the technology department with the media studies approach. It goes back to what language we're talking about when we talk to teachers about what media literacy is. Despite the fact that we've seen advances in the past ten years, in a couple of events I've done in the last year – California's At-Risk Dropout Prevention Conferences and Wisconsin's Social Studies

Conferences – in surveying classroom teachers at the start of those sessions, the overwhelming majority of them still think "media literacy" means teaching *with* media. What we are talking *about* are the skills and the competencies involved in teaching about media and the deconstruction and analysis of a text, whether it's a textbook or the evening news or a website. There's a continuum there, an approach that links the literacies, so we don't get into competing for their time, competing for funding. That's the umbrella approach that I think we need to build.

O'BRIEN: And that's a brave new world right there. Yes? Kathy. And then, were you also wanting to say something? Between the two Kathy's. Each of you.

SWANN: What I'm going to say was building on what Jason said and was going to bridge to what David said, so it will be very brief – that in doing professional development, we often talk about the back door in or the way to sneak it in. And when you start to carry that through, what it really means is we need to connect it to what students need to learn. We need to connect it to the content area. Research has shown over and over that teachers take part in and value and continue doing professional development when they can see that it clearly impacts student learning. That's the overriding factor, more than if they get extra pay or they earn credits or whatever.

So, as David said in his opening comments, when he gave the example of linking media literacy to social studies curriculum, linking it to the content and what students need to learn is what's going to give it value for teachers, give it classroom time, and also link it to No Child Left Behind. So, while we call it "the back door in," it's really the front door way. It's got to link to what students need to know.

O'BRIEN: Yes?

KOPLITZ: Hi. I'm Peggy Koplitz, and I'm with Alexandria City Public Schools. I am a library media specialist. I happen to work with curriculum right now. It was very interesting hearing the comment from the middle school girl. My thought was there are many students who can zip around and find information, but there are many students who can zip around and not find information. I've often seen kids on Amazon.com taking down notes on the Civil War because that's what they clicked on. So I was just thinking that we're assuming that kids know more, and they don't always. Another thing I thought of is that in Alexandria we have many parents who are new to this country. They are not literate in English. We cannot ask them to be media literate. Many do not have formal educations. It becomes the job of the schools to help those parents' children.

O'BRIEN: Thank you. Are many of those parents learning English by watching television? Do you know?

KOPLITZ: I actually spent three years teaching English at night to adults. Some of them are not even learning English. They're able to function in their native language in the United States in little pockets. Some of them come to school just to learn English for their job, and they use their primary language at their home, in their church, and in their work.

O'BRIEN: Thank you. Yes, Bonnie?

FRAZIER: I'm Bonnie Frazier, with Communities in Schools. We're basically a state and school program helping kids to successfully learn and prepare for life in their settings, the schools. I'd like to wholeheartedly agree with you, Jason, and whether it's back door or front door, I would suggest that we ditto that with the parents. And I would like to start with what Kathleen Ziefang said, and that is really defining and helping everybody define where we are. We work with a lot of parents, and their getting involved could be as simple as knowing what you mean when you say "media literacy." So I would start with the beginning. I'd also say that although I would ditto that to parents, whether we call it back door, going to where they are, we're going to have to involve everybody. This is an issue where we have to involve government, we have to involve parents, homes, schools, churches, and I think we might look for those because actually what we're doing is building mechanisms and processes to support those mechanisms. I think it's a challenge, but in the end, everybody's going to have to be involved.

RACE: Regarding the point about media literacy not being a stand-alone program, the best stories that we've

done in *Cable in the Classroom Magazine* about teachers who are implementing media literacy have been about teachers who are incorporating it in small ways, all across the curriculum, or library media specialists who are incorporating it in small ways, all across the curriculum. And, in fact, teachers *are* using media every day. They are using textbooks, newspapers, magazines, the Internet, video, and all media literacy takes, at least to begin with, is to ask a couple of very key questions about the resources that the teachers are using, whatever subject they're teaching. Many teachers, from my experience, don't know what questions they should be asking or are maybe intimidated by the idea of "Oh, am I 'doing' media literacy now? I don't really know what I'm doing." That kind of thing. So I think the more we can advocate to have a component of teacher training in any subject area be to ask a few key questions about the resources being used, the more we'll see media literacy lessons implemented in small ways.

As to the topic of parents, I edited a magazine for about four years that was designed for parents, called *Better Viewing*. From the feedback that we got and the research that we did, we found that when parents had kids in preschool they were very interested in learning everything they could learn about media and what they could do about it and how they could control it in the home and what they could teach their kids, and they had an impact. After preschool, they started to get more overwhelmed with all the other things and they got excited about it if their kids came home and were excited about it. And then the parents would start to learn from the kids, if the kids were exposed to it then, at that age.

O'BRIEN: Interesting. Thank you. Kate?

WOODWARD: Well, I work on a daily basis with standards development, and first of all, I wanted to say of the National Board that increasingly teachers are aware that media literacy is necessary for accomplished teaching. But even when they think it's absolutely critical, they're still struggling with what it means, and they're having trouble trying to put it in their standards in the right way.

And so gradually in our standards development meetings they're learning a whole lot as they put it down on paper, but I know that as we're revising our standards, there's an extremely strong commitment among the accomplished teachers on our committees to media literacy, both in English language arts across the board and also in health. Health education standards are about to be published, and they again talked about the importance of media literacy and those kinds of things. I think also one of the things is to help teachers gain a comfort level with media literacy, that they can teach themselves. There are so many resources available on the Internet or in books or whatever, so that they can learn the beginning things about it and then learn with their students. So, I think through standards we can get people committed to it, possibly, but then again it's getting those professional development from preservice all the way through. I also support the notion that people have talked about, about integration. It's all interdisciplinary, about all the language arts skills, all the social studies skills, the more and more that they can see it as just a part of the normal process.

O'BRIEN: Does media literacy have to be integrated into content areas because it's not a real subject? Because schools don't think it's real? Lynn?

WIDDOWSON: I think that it absolutely has to be integrated into the content area because as more and more states deal with testing – Maryland has been a testing state for a long time, and No Child Left Behind is requiring even more testing – if it's not connected with content standards and teachers cannot see how this is going to fit in their curriculum and, as someone else mentioned, that it's going to make a difference in student learning and student achievement, they're not going to do it. When it comes to staff development, one of the barriers that I've seen in some of the counties in Maryland that have not initiated the media literacy program is in the supervisors of elementary education who haven't yet seen the connection. If they don't see

the connection to student achievement and learning, they're not going to fit it in.

O'BRIEN: Doug?

LEVIN: I do think it needs to be integrated, and I think there will be a lot of pressure to do so in ways that are going to be very relevant to the new testing programs in the new law. And that has to do with the fact that the way students are doing their work is changing. This is relevant for all teachers. In fact, there were interesting recent articles in *The Washington Post* and the *New York Times* about the way teachers, in this case of English, needed to change the way they were teaching and the nature of the assignments they gave because of what students were doing online at home. They could not give an essay assignment with four weeks of lead time. They could not give certain types of assignments and expect that students would not be accessing resources that would sort of subvert the educational value of the exercise. I would just say one other thing, that I wholeheartedly agree with Peggy's comment. Students are all over the map on this, and I think that in some communities it is going to be a much larger issue than others, but I think it's emerging and it's not going to go away. But students are changing the way that they do their work and it's a level of awareness that is needed by teachers, by parents, by administrators. If you look at surveys of those populations, it is quite clear that they think students are doing different things and they have more control over what students are doing than appears to be the case when you talk to students directly.

O'BRIEN: Which has always been the case. Ann, and then David.

WALKER: I would certainly agree with the comments toward integrating the literacy into the curriculum. In answer to your recent question, does it have to be integrated because it isn't a content, I think it is a content. It has its own terminology. It has definitions. It has content, but it's a content that shares the processes that are embedded in all of the other contents. I don't think the learnings about media literacy can be coincidental. I think they have to be intentional, and that has to be established as it's worked into the standards and into the practices. I would agree that it can't be a separate issue in professional development. We've had a workshop on media literacy available for principals for almost two years now, but we have not had a request from a state affiliate to bring that out. So that tells you very much that administrators are also responding to things that center on high-stakes assessments and content areas with which they are familiar. So the secret comes in embedding it intentionally as a content within a content with shared processes.

O'BRIEN: Thank you. My question had to do with not whether it was a real subject but whether it was perceived as a real subject by teachers and administrators. Actually, the fact that nobody's signing up for your workshop might be part of the answer to that.

KLEEMAN: I'm intrigued. I have not seen the stories that Doug was talking about, but I want to go back and find them now. I'm intrigued by this idea that the teachers are finding they have to change the way that they assign and the way that they teach. I think that may be the most revealing thing about the need for media literacy to be incorporated, because what they really ought to be doing is teaching the kids the appropriate use of those media resources, as opposed to giving up and saying, "Well, they're going to do this, so I have to change the way I do it."

O'BRIEN: Let me ask you a question about teachers. National Council of Teachers of English, as David said, has had media literacy standards for a while. I can tell you that probably 60 percent of people who teach English in this country, among whom I count myself, have the class read a Shakespeare play and then watch the movie – the whole movie, at the end of the study of

the play. Instead, you could get three different versions of *Romeo and Juliet* on tape and show the same scene done three different ways, thereby using media to illuminate a million things, but no. A lot of us in classrooms still do it the traditional way. So, given what everybody has said here about the importance of teachers and the importance of bringing them, no matter how, together with parents and students, as Kolanji said, or in other kinds of configurations, what needs to happen, and who will do it? What's the first step, and where should that first step come from? Greg, you should have the answer to this.

MALLING: Well, actually, there's a question in my mind, too, which you're kind of addressing, which is to what extent is media literacy not necessarily just deconstructing the messages, but deconstructing the differing functions of those media that we're using? I mean to watch a play is definitely a different experience than to read the play, on many levels. It's not just the message, it's the whole processing, the active versus passive issue. We address this, to some degree, with *Hamlet* in the senior year. It's an interesting idea. Shakespeare certainly didn't write that to be read. What effect does that have? It's like reading an *X-Files* script or something. It's not supposed to be read, in essence. The television version is probably more appropriate in that case, and I'm wondering to what degree do you look at the Louis Mumfordite style, look at the medium itself, and say, "What effect does this have on us?"

O'BRIEN: Yes. That was really good, but you're dodging my question about the next step.

MALLING: Thank you.

O'BRIEN: Jason? You have the answer.

ADSIT: Well, to get back to your question, schools of education have a very large role to play in all of this. One of the things that No Child Left Behind is doing is fostering a greater partnership between schools of education and their local school districts. That's written into the bill, and schools of education are coming around strongly on this. I think many schools of education are doing a very good job in technology literacy, digital literacy, and media literacy. That doesn't mean that there's not a lot of work to do, and that conversations like this can't help. I'm certainly going to be sending out the transcripts of these, minus my comments, to all our member institutions. **[audience laughs]**

O'BRIEN: Jason, I'm not sure you can do that.

ADSIT: On both the preservice and the professional development end you're going to have schools of education and they're going to need to partner with local schools and school districts, and work with state school officers as well as other organizations to get this done. It's going to take a real group effort.

O'BRIEN: They will also need information about media literacy, though, yes? And so where do they get that?

CONSIDINE: Well, they would get it from the professional groups in this country, but also in Canada. There are any number of resources available – the Alliance for a Media Literate America here. I think the strategy, however, to answer your question, is to create the biggest tent possible and, for the most part this morning, we've gone in the direction that these forums tend to go, which is to suggest that it's interdisciplinary and to look at the mission statements of those disciplines such as social studies and health and English. And I think that's a fine way to go, but in addition to building the bridge to the disciplines, I think we can also build a bridge, if you will, that I use in the national middle school model. And that is the question of what is developmentally appropriate. So, if you look at the nature and needs of the early adolescent, and if you look at the traditional developmental tasks of adolescents, as Havokos explains it or as *Rhetoric to Reality in Middle School Curriculum* explains it, that is why NMSA, at its Portland Conference has media literacy as both a preconference and an in-conference session at the end of the month. It's also why its executive director, Sue Swaim, in the next issue of the *Journal of Media Literacy*, has a two-page endorsement of media literacy – because she has not simply looked at the subject areas, she has looked at, if you will, what is the nature of our client, and our vision statement, as expressed in its leading document, which is *Turning Points 2000*.

I think a third area that has just been alluded to partly ties into accountability, high-stakes testing, and emerging work on brain development. I'm increasingly interested in what we know about the impact of the media on the brain development of the child and the early adolescent. I think there are strong areas in which we could go to Howard Gardner's work on multiple intelligence, in which we can make connections between media literacy and learning styles, but I'd also have to pause here and say we have to be aware that some people perceive media literacy as teaching against the media. Now, I don't think that's what we're talking about in this room, but there is a very active, well-meaning, energized body of people out there who think to do media literacy is only to protect kids from potentially harmful media messages.

To segue back into my statement about the brain, a book came out this year. It was on *Oprah*, so it must have been a fabulous book. Mel Levine, *A Mind at a Time*. It's about brain development. If you read that book, Dr. Levine, from the University of North Carolina, steps through television as the first culprit, the Internet as the second culprit, music as the third culprit, film, and video games. He discreetly names each medium, and they only appear as culprits. He only talks in terms of what they do *to* kids, rather than what they do *for* kids. That puts us in a position where we have to look at what the media does to kids rather than the central question from the kids' point of view, which is what *they* do with the media. This is complex, and there are people out there who are mounting very strong arguments who aren't seeing things the way we're seeing things.

O'BRIEN: Right. Yes, Shirley?

IGO: And we're talking about children, which of course has always been the focus of my organization, National PTA. We are just now partnering in November with American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education on a teacher conference based on the fact that teachers and parents need to be very much involved with what's happening, because teachers and parents are the two groups that most intimately deal with children for 12 years as partners. Our conference is talking about the importance of professional development and how it intertwines with parent involvement. I think that those are two critical elements that we're talking about here. We talk about media literacy, so I think that when you talk about the big tent and about bringing stakeholders together, these are the kinds of things that I think can truly make a difference as we focus our attention on children and the importance of media literacy.

O'BRIEN: Thank you. We have a very few minutes left, so who hasn't spoken who would like to? Kristin.

VAN HOOK: Kristin Van Hook, with the Partnership for Twenty-First Century Skills. We're working on a public-private partnership that builds on much of what was done in the CEO Forum on Education and Technology, which built a self-assessment chart for technology in schools. One of the concepts there in terms of next steps is to help with the definition of 21st century skills, media literacy clearly being one of those, how they integrate with basic skills, and to provide some kind of a self-assessment tool so that schools and educators can look at the different types of skills related to media literacy. What is a vision for a school that is just starting to integrate those versus one that has integrated them very successfully, similar to what happened with technology? Where some schools had just started to integrate technology, others were really far along.

I think that's one area where there might be the ability to bring together some of the questions about definitions that many people have raised here, the competing definitions of 21st-century skills. With a self-assessment tool for schools to look at where they are and get a bit of a vision as to where they are going in terms of integrating that into the curriculum. So I wanted to mention that as one potential next step.

O'BRIEN: Thank you. Are there any final questions or comments? Kathy?

SWANN: I have a concern that has been forming itself throughout the conversation: I am very concerned that the efforts and the thoughts that have come across at the table here are going to fall into the same chasm that reading instruction has, and that in an effort to make all teachers teachers of reading, no one really knows how to teach reading. What I'm thinking of specifically is working across all disciplines and expecting all teachers whenever possible to integrate media literacy into their curriculum or into their content area. Who is actually taking the lead in teaching the students how to do it?

Many content area teachers will want to be able to use media literacy skills with their students in exploring the content, but who is going to teach students how to do it? It's happened so clearly with reading as it's coming across more that all teachers are responsible for a student's reading achievement, even though many teachers don't know how to teach reading, and I could see the same thing happening here with media literacy. Many teachers would be trying to use it but never actually teaching the foundations of it.

O'BRIEN: Yes?

CROSBY: Good morning. I'm Liz Crosby from Maryland PTA, and after listening, I would just like to say that this is a partnership, not something that teachers should be doing independently. We need to have families, parents, and schools working together to make sure that our children are understanding – that they can turn the television off if it's not what they need to be hearing, that they don't have to go on the Internet websites, to all of those sundry places we get taken, and that not everything written in a newspaper or in a book is true – that you have to look at it in a discerning way. And that we as parents have to teach our children to begin learning, and that teachers have to help us get that message across. It does have to be that combination, and if we try to do it in isolation, either as the family, or as the school, nothing's going to be accomplished. So parents are teachers of reading and parents are history teachers and parents teach kids about media literacy. We all need to be working together to make sure that we can accomplish that so that we do have citizens who join the world when they're 18 and who vote and participate in our democracy.

O'BRIEN: That is a great way to wrap this up, I think. Thanks to all of you. Obviously, this is a piece of a conversation. All of you have had conversations about this before you got here. I hope there will be many more conversations about this after you leave. We will get you a list of everybody who was here, including e-mail addresses, because I think that would be a helpful way to continue the conversation. Clearly, there are some main points to think about. One is the notion of parents and teachers and students all together. Kolanji's idea of learning together and teaching each other and teaching together is something that is resonating around this table. Also, there is the whole issue of professional development – for teachers but also with families and so forth. In addition, there is the connection to student learning and being able to show the impact on student learning. That also seems important, as does clarity around what media literacy is. Even though David started us off with what it is, we need clarity so that teachers and parents will have a solid sense of what they're after and what they're talking about. As I said earlier, we will publish your comments so that representatives from other organizations involved in this effort can read them.

So, thanks very much for creating this conversation with us and letting us have part of your morning. Keep us posted.

[Applause]

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